Hitler, Born at Versailles

June 18, 2012

Introduction

For most Americans the globe-girdling catastrophe that we call the Second World War is now a matter neither of personal experience nor of memory, but of wood pulp and celluloid, books and films. Larger still is the majority for whom the cataclysmic First World War - once spoken of as "The Great War" - is ancient history, an antic prelude to what those who participated in it sometimes like to call "The Big One." For most of us, perhaps, the two wars compare as do contrasting movies from the two eras. Our image of the First World War is brief, grainy, silent, with black-and-white, herky-jerky doughboys "going over the top"; we picture the Second as panoramic, technicolor, reverberating with stereophonic sound and fury, armadas of ships and planes and tanks sweeping forward to destiny.

A further disparity may be found in the popular historical and political assessment, such as it is, of the two wars. The majority of Americans doubtless still believes that the key to the Second World War is a simple one: a.demonic megalomaniac, Adolf Hitler, rose up to lead Germany to world domination and instead led his people to well-deserved ruin. Yet the view of the First World War held by the Americans of today, it is safe to say, is rather more tepid than the white-hot feelings of many of their grandparents in 1917, when "100-per-cent Americans" agitated to "Hang the Kaiser!" and mobs sacked German newspaper offices and presses in the worst outbreak of ethnic bigotry in our country's history. For the contemporary generation the origins and course of the First World War are murky and obscure. Even the terrible hecatombs of the Western Front have faded into oblivion, and Kaiser Bill and his spike-helmeted Huns have long since been superseded by the Fuehrer and his goose-stepping myrmidons.

The evident lack of interest of even the literate American public in their country's first "famous victory" of this century has been mirrored to a certain extent by the professional historians of the Left-Liberal Establishment, which of course holds sway in the colleges and universities of not only American but the entire Western world. The professors have their reasons, however. The more competent among them are aware that shortly after the First World War, in a signal achievement of historical scholarship, Revisionist writers in this country and in Europe unmasked the mendacious propaganda disseminated by the British, French, Tsarist Russian, and American governments.

Professors such as Sidney Bradshaw Fay, Max Montgelas, Georges Demartial, and the incomparable Harry Elmer Barnes overthrew the historiographical and moral underpinnings of the verdict expressed in Article 231 of the onerous Treaty of Versailles, that Germany and her allies had imposed an aggressive war on the Triple Entente and thus bore all responsibility for the calamity. The Englishman Arthur Ponsonby demonstrated just as convincingly that the atrocity charges against the Germans, including such canards as a "cadaver factory" for soap and the like from the corpses of fallen German soldiers, were manufactured and

spread by teams of talented fabricators, not a few of them, like Arnold Toynbee, reputable men of scholarship ostensibly dedicated to the search for truth.

The modern school of historical obfuscators, propagandists more than scholars, and thus cognizant of the need for a consistent pattern of German "guilt" and "aggression" throughout this century, long ago undertook to roll back and suppress the achievements of Revisionist scholarship on the origins of the First World War. Inspired by the German renegade Fritz Fischer, whose *Griff nach der Weltmacht* (*Germany's Bid for World Power,* 1961), they hailed with hysterical relief, they have dismissed with sovereign disdain the notion that powers such as France, the British Empire, Tsarist Russia, or Serbia might have been motivated by aggressive designs. The professors have employed a second sleight-of-hand trick against Revisionist findings. It has been their tactic to separate quite artificially the origins and course of the war from its result, the Paris peace treaties, above all that of Versailles, and from the ineluctable consequences which flowed from that result. For them, and for their public of university students and educated laymen, Versailles was an entirely justified consequence of the war, and Adolf Hitler sprang up either as a manifestation of the German nation's twisted "id" (Freud and his numerous epigoni and camp followers) or the puppet of the "Ruhr barons" (the Marxists), propelled along his way by something these professors are always careful to refer to as the "stab-in-the-back legend."

Our leftist educators have also been adept at evading an honest evaluation of the Red terror which swept across Central and Eastern Europe in the wake of the German collapse, although they have wept copious tears behind their pink spectacles over the crushing of Communist juntas in Bavaria, Berlin, and Budapest. The deliberate failure of the professors to make sense of the cataclysmic events of 1914-1920 in Europe has now been redressed, however, by a man of both learning and action, a confidante of statesmen and a worthy comrade of heroes: the Belgian exile Léon Degrelle.

Léon Degrelle, who was born in 1906 in the sleepy little town of Bouillon, now a backwater in Belgium's Luxembourg province, but once the seat of Godefroy de Bouillon, first Crusader king of Jerusalem, speaks in a voice few Americans will be familiar with. French-speaking, Catholic, European with a continental, not an insular, perspective, the man who nearly overturned his country's corrupt power elite in the 1930's thinks in a perspective alien to our (comparatively recent) intellectual heritage of pragmatism, positivism, and unbounded faith in the inevitability of "progress." Before all a man of action, Degrelle is in a tradition of vitalism, combining an inborn elan and chivalry with a hard-eyed, instinctual grasp of the calculus that determines politics - activity in relation to power - today foreign, for the most part, to the "Anglo-Saxon" nations.

It was precisely Degrelle's will to heroic action in the defense of Europe and its values that led him to raise a volunteer force of his French-speaking countrymen, many of them followers of his pre-war Rexist political movement, and to ally with his country's conqueror, Adolf Hitler, in a European crusade against Communism and Communism's citadel, the Soviet Union. Degrelle, who has

matchlessly recounted his role in that struggle (*Campaign in Russia: The Waffen SS on the Eastern Front*, Institute for Historical Review, Torrance, CA, 1985), began the project to which this volume is the introduction in his late seventies. From the vantage point offered by decades of reflection in his Spanish exile, the former charismatic political leader and highly decorated combat veteran has undertaken nothing less than the thorough, searching, and (insofar as possible) objective account of the character and career of the man who once told him, "If I had a son, I would want him to be like you", Adolf Hitler.

Those inclined to dismiss Degrelle's objectivity in examing the life of his commander-in-chief with a supercilious sneer will shortly have the mandatory for Establishment scholars on so much as mentioning the dread name. Indeed, ample material for comparison already exists in the fawning name. Indeed, ample material for comparison already exists in the fawning biographical homages offered to Roosevelt and Churchill by their one-time courtiers and authorized hagiographers, not to mention the slavish panegyrics offered the Western leaders' ally and boon companion, Stalin, by his sycophants (not a few of them residents and citizens of the Western "democracies").

There are those readers who will fault this first volume of Degrelle's ambitious project, which demonstrates the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of the bourgeois leadership of the West and their unavoidable responsibility for the rise of Hitler. Some will object that it might have been more scholarly, while others will quibble that it ought to have given recognition to more recent trends in the historiography of the First World War. Such criticisms miss the point of Degrelle's work, to reach the broadest interested and intelligent public with an approach the French have styled haute vulgarisation, which is to say, popularization of a high order.

Indeed Hitler: Born at Versailles, in encompassing the turbulent years 1914-1920, boasts a thematic unity that few but Degrelle could have brought to the period. For in chronicling the shady plots and complots of the European regimes before the war, the awful bloodbaths of the Western and Eastern fronts, and the fall of empires and the rise of Communism after the war, Degrelle is telling of the collapse of 19th-century Europe - its economic liberalism, its parliamentary democracy, its self-satisfied imperialism, its irrational faith in reason and progress.

He is, furthermore, hammering mercilessly at the puny successors of the Poincarés, the Lloyd Georges, and the Wilsons, the present-day "liberals" and "conservatives" who dominate in the governments and the academies and the media: skewering their baneful lies one by one.

Degrelle knows that there is little that is more contemptible than the posturing of our academics, who snivel their love of peace at every instance where it means supine acquiescence in the latest advance of Communism or of atavistic savagery under the banner of "self-determination" or some other such transparent lie, but who dilate with sanguinary enthusiasm over the "necessity" of the blood baths that marked the two world wars of this century. How the professors and

the publicists love to chide Chamberlain and Daladier, the British and French leaders at Munich in 1938, for their "appeasement," in attempting to stave off yet another fratricidal war! Perhaps only a combat-hardened veteran like Degrelle, on intimate terms with the horrors of war, can be a true man of peace.

It is Degrelle's passionate desire for a Europe, and a West, united above the nationalistic prides and rancors of the past, which leads him to what for many Revisonists on both sides of the Atlantic will regard as his most controversial stance: his firm and sometimes strident condemnation of the balance-of-power policy of the British Empire. The reader should bear in mind that Degrelle's hostility is aimed not at the English, Scottish, or Welsh nations, but at the governments that have made British policy during this century, with such catastrophic results not only for the West, but for the people of Britain as well.

In any case this panoramic introduction to the life and times of Adolf Hitler, the key figure of this century, is a grand beginning to a project worthy of Degrelle, the Belgian who sought the Golden Fleece as the Caucasus in the service of his nation and his culture nearly fifty years ago.

Theodore J. O'Keefe
June, 1987

Author's Preface

An assassination which might have remained no more than an outrageous incident in the history of terrorism has instead had a decisive and disastrous impact on the twentieth century. It provoked the "Great War" of 1914-1918; made possible the October Revolution of the Soviets in 1917; enabled Hitler's rise to power in 1933 and subsequently a Second World War; and above all, the confrontation of the two contemporary giants, the U.S.S.R. and the United States, with, as its issue sooner or later, a devastating Third World War. What seemed at first a transient, if major, news story - the murder of Austria-Hungary's Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife at Sarajevo in Bosnia on June 28, 1914 - would in several days be revealed as the fruit of a convoluted political plot. At first the affair seemed limited to Austria and Serbia, notoriously quarrelsome neighbors. But at the end of four weeks, it was clear that the Serbs, at the threshold of the Balkans, had been cunningly manipulated by Pan-Slavists in the imperial Russian court. For its part, the Austrian government was joined to Germany by a political and military alliance. In turn, the Russian government was linked by a military treaty to the rulers of France, desperate to regain Alsace- Lorraine from Germany, which had annexed those provinces in 1871. Furthermore, the British establishment, incensed at the rise of Germany's economic power and the expansion of its fleet, had moved ever closer to France and its recent rival, Russia, in the previous few years. The stage was thus set for a cataclysm which would shake the White world with unprecedented fury. Within five weeks, thanks to several bullets fired by a nonentity in a sleepy Balkan town, the great powers of Europe would be at each other's throats. Then, with neither the Triple Entente of Britain, France, and Russia nor the Dual Alliance of Germany and Austria-Hungary able to force the other to yield, the warring nations would find no other solution but to drag nineteen other countries into the slaughter. By virtue of promises as false as they were contradictory, the competing sides would offer the selfsame spoils of war in secret compacts with two and sometimes three different nations. Millions of people would be auctioned off, without their knowledge or consent, as booty for their nations' bitterest rivals. To arouse anti-German hatred to a fever pitch, the powers of the Entente charged the Germans with the most shameful atrocities, stirring up a vengeful fury which, together with the short-sighted greed and stupidity of the victors, would result in the Treaty of Versailles. This treaty, which crushed Europe's foremost power, Germany, beneath a burden of shame and reparations, which amputated vital territories from the body of the nation, and rendered it defenseless against enemies within and without, at length was successful only in provoking a new and inevitable European war. The intelligent minds of Europe foresaw the consequences of this treaty even before it was imposed. One of the principal negotiators, Britain's David Lloyd George, warned the treaty makers at Paris in 1919: "If peace is made under these conditions, it will be the source of a new war." And so it was, for without the Treaty of Versailles the rise of an unknown infantryman, born in Austria and hardened on the Western Front to absolute power in Germany

would have been an impossibility. Adolf Hitler came into the world at Braunau-am-Inn, but politically he was born at Versailles. June 29, 1919, the day the treaty was signed, not only ended the First World War - it began the Second.

Contents

Part I

Ambush At Sarajevo

Chapter 1

Black Hand In Sarajevo

The twenty-eighth of June, 1914, was a warm and sunny day all across Europe. Few could have suspected that this outwardly tranquil summer day would be written in blood on the calendar of history, and that this fateful June day would be the precursor of so many blood-red June days for Europe in this century, from the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919 to the surrender of France in 1940 to the "D-Day" landings of 1944 to the dismantling of the old European order at Potsdam in June 1945. Nowhere on that fateful day did the sun's rays beat down more implacably than at Sarajevo, a sleepy Balkan town in Bosnia. The former seat of a province of the Ottoman empire, it was oriental in appearance, with white-minareted mosques towering over the winding streets of the bazaar. Administered by the Austro-Hungarian Empire since 1878, annexed outright in 1908, it was a place where little out of the ordinary ever took place. On this day, however, the most important man in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was visiting. He was the heir to the Habsburg throne on which the ancient Franz Joseph sat, who, at eighty-six, after sixty-six years of rule, had been drained by illness and care. The archduke was a robust man, his breast jingling with medals, his helmet richly plumed, an ardent hunter who had filled the palaces and hunting lodges of Europe with his antlered trophies. The heir had come to Sarajevo in his capacity as commander-in-chief of the Austro-Hungarian army, to observe maneuvers which were being carried out several miles away. Franz Ferdinand and his consort, Sophie, rode along the quay beside Sarajevo's Miljach River virtually unprotected on their way to the town hall. Their four-car procession was barely underway when a young terrorist aimed a bomb at the archduke. The bomb glanced off the back of the archduke's car and exploded beneath the following vehicle, injuring two officers, one of whom was rushed to a nearby hospital. Franz Ferdinand and his wife, shaken but unhurt, continued on to the town hall, where the archduke angrily rebuked the mayor for his city's lack of hospitality. Then the little motorcade set off for the hospital in which the wounded young officer was being treated.

The lead car, in which the mayor sat, made a wrong turn, and the archduke's car followed it. The military governor of Bosnia, General Potiorek, alertly signaled the driver to back up and return to the planned route. As the driver braked, a young man stepped forth, took careful aim, and fired two shots into the open car. One shot struck Franz Ferdinand in the neck. The other hit his wife Sophie, the Dutchess of Hohenberg, in the stomach. As she slumped against her husband, his green tunic covered with blood, he murmured, "Sophie, live for our children." The couple died within minutes after the attack.

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The news of his nephew and heir's assassination was received by Emperor Franz Josef at his palace in Vienna, the Hofburg, with unseemly coolness. The old man bore a grudge against Franz Ferdinand, perhaps partially because the archduke had succeeded Franz Josef's own son, Rudolf, who died in a tragic dual suicide with his lover, Marie Vetsera, in the royal hunting lodge at Mayerling twenty-five years before. More important, Franz Ferdinand's wife Sophie, although a countess from an old Czech family, was far inferior in blood and rank to the standards prescribed by custom and law for a Habsburg empress. When Franz Ferdinand married her in 1900, he was forced to renounce all possibility of either his wife or their future children assuming the Habsburg throne. A morganatic marriage-unforgivable crime in the monarchical profession! To be sure, crowned heads are allowed mistresses and even bastards, perfectly permissible "amorous adventures." But if a Rudolf of Habsburg, a Franz Ferdinand, an Edward VIII of England, or a Leopold III, King of the Belgians, does not limit his choice to the princely game preserve of obligatory spouses, let him beware! So it was that at the state funeral for Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Vienna, the slain couple rode apart, in separate hearses, the Archduke's a majestic affair decked in black plumes and drawn with black horses, trailed by a procession of dignitaries of state and court, Sophie's following behind, notably less magnificent. At the cathedral her coffin was laid out one step below that of her husband. In lieu of a crown, the coffin of the Archduke's wife was decked by the fan of a mere court lady. The old man was still ashamed of his nephew's consort, even in death.

Franz Josef had another reason for not being overly perturbed at his heir's violent passing. The archduke's political ideas and his notions for reforming the empire were anathema to the old monarch, who with each passing year grew ever more conservative. In 1867 Franz Josef had been forced by circumstances (Austria's defeat by Prussia the year before) to grant the Hungarians an almost equal role in what became the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary. In the following decades the Slays subject to Habsburg rule had begun to clamor for increased recognition, and Franz Ferdinand was known to be sympathetic to them, perhaps even willing to go so far as to institute a "trial," or three- way, monarchy. To the reactionary Franz Josef, as well as to the proud Magyars, jealous of their prerogatives, trialism posed a grave threat to the empire. There were forces beyond the borders of the empire who found the archduke's ideas threatening

as well. Serbia across the Danube from Austria-Hungary, was the most vigorous and aggressive of the Balkan countries. Subject to the rule of the Ottoman Turks for centuries, many of their people converts to Islam, the Balkan lands-Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, Romania, and Greece-had achieved their independence over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Once free, they had devoted their energies to trying to dominate each other, squabbling over such inextricable intermingled ethnic and religious jumbles as Macedonia and Thrace with a barbarous zeal both murderous and indefatigable. Briefly united in 1912, the Balkan countries had succeeded in liberating the remainder of the Balkans from Turkish rule, driving the Turks back to the outskirts of Constantinople, the last Turkish outpost on European soil. The following year the Serbs and Bulgarians had gone at one another with savage abandon, each determined to rule Macedonia. The hapless Macedonians themselves had borne the brunt of the struggle, thousands of them massacred, still more dragooned into the invading armies of the Serbs and Bulgarians. Serbia triumphed, for it had won the backing of a powerful patron, which was determined to use the small Balkan state as the fulcrum for its drive to the south and west-the mighty Russian Empire. Defeated and humiliated by Japan in 1905, the tsarist imperialists had been thwarted in their drive to the east. Gone were the days of the previous centuries when the Cossacks swept invincibly across the crystalline snows of Siberia and the great Bear advanced into Alaska and down the California coastline. The Russian navy had been shown up as ponderously inefficient and outdated. After a bizarre adventure in the North Sea, in which Russian ships had fired on English fishing vessels in the belief that they were Japanese destroyers, the Russian fleet had sailed 10,000 miles only to be sent to the bottom by Admiral Togo's Japanese fleet at Tsushima Strait in May 1905. Russia's armies had been bested by the Japanese in Manchuria, with the resultant loss for the tsar of Port Arthur and the remainder of Manchuria.

Thereafter the imperialists of the Russian Empire had changed their strategy, seeking to exploit the hopes and fears of their Slavic cousins in the Balkans, preeminently the Serbs and the Bulgarians, whose countries offered ready access to the Adriatic and that age-old objective of the tsars, the multicolored domes and battlements of Constantinople, gateway to the warm waters of the Mediterranean.

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In 1908, still smarting from their Far Eastern disaster, the Russian imperialists and their Serbian proteges had been forced to accept, at the Congress of London, the annexation by Austria-Hungary of Bosnia- Herzegovina, a Slavic territory to the west of Serbia and long coveted by the Serbs. Serbian control of the region would have brought their tsarist masters access to the ports of the Adriatic, but the Russians felt themselves too weak militarily to press the issue. Chastened but undiscouraged, the imperialist circle around Tsar Nicholas Il-the "Pan-Slavists"-intensified its activity. Nicholas, dangerous precisely because of

his weak will and his eternal vacillation, gave them free rein. The St. Petersburg regime stirred the already boiling Balkan cauldron ever more vigorously. Russian agents and Russian advisers gave the orders and supplied the wherewithal for the Serbs in their growing quarrel with Austria. As the Russian minister to Serbia, Nicolai Hartwig, indiscreetly remarked to the Romanian minister, Filaliti, on November 12, 1912: "Russia counts on making Serbia, enlarged by the Balkan provinces of Austria-Hungary, the vanguard of Pan-Slavism." Hartwig, the tsar's ambassador, was the undisputed master of Belgrade, the man whom the French ambassador, Descos, called "the real sovereign of Serbia." Others referred to Hartwig merely as "the viceroy." In theory the head of state was Serbia's king, Peter I, but King Peter, the grandson of a hog dealer, owed his accession to the throne to a cabal of Serbian plotters who had assassinated the previous king, Alexander Obrenovich, and his queen, Draga, in a grisly double murder in 1903. King Peter's family, the Karageorgeviches, had waged a running feud with their Obrenovich rivals for most of the preceding century, in one incident of which the chief of the Obrenovich clan had presented the carefully salted head of one of the Karageorgeviches to the sultan in Istanbul. Peter I's prime minister, Nicolas Pashich, was a cunning and malleable man who had switched without undue fits of conscience from being Alexander's prime minister one day to heading the government of the king elevated by the assassins the next. He feared the firebrands who had murdered the royal couple; he was willing to serve as the tool of the powerful and influential Russians.

The interrogation of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassins in Sarajevo led, slowly and inexorably, to the implication of the highest councils of the Serbian regime. At first tight-lipped, the two terrorists, Chabrinovich, who had tossed the bomb which missed the archduke but wounded his officer, and Gavrilo Princip, who fired the fatal shots, denied any larger conspiracy. They let slip only one name. When asked who had taught them how to shoot they replied: "Ciganovich." In fact, Milan Ciganovich, an official of the Servian Railway and member of the secret terrorist group, "The Black Hand," was a personal agent of Prime Minister Pashich.

Chapter 2

Europe Reacts

Had the Serbian government felt itself above suspicion, it would have immediately begun a public investigation of a grave crime in which five of its nationals had been involved. To refrain from an investigation or even from issuing a public statement could only strengthen the growing suspicion in Austria of official Serbian involvement. In fact Pashich had known of the plot weeks before June 28th. As the English historian George Malcolm Thomson was later to write: This tall, good-looking man, whose dignified beard and imposing presence disguised one of the cunningest foxes of the Balkans, knew about the projected murder almost as soon as it was planned. Perhaps he had heard about it accidentally, through some eavesdropper in one of the handful of Belgrade cafes where politics was discussed. More likely, an agent of his, a railway clerk named Gaginovich, who was also a member of the Black Hand, passed the news on to him. (The Twelve Days, p. 48) Thus the conspiracy could have been thwarted in advance. In that case, however, Pashich would have certainly incurred the vengeance of the Black Hand. Since the bearded old politician valued his skin, he feared to quash the plot openly. On the other hand Pashich was anxious to cover himself against any accusations of complicity from the Austrian side. He hit upon the expedient of delivering a veiled and delphic warning to the Austrians, which was delivered by the Serbian ambassador to Vienna to the Austrian minister of finance, Léon Bilinski, a Pole from Galicia, among whose duties was to administer Bosnia. Bilinski, who was no loyal supporter of the Austro- Hungarian empire (he was to defect during the course of the war), either made little of the Serbian ambassador's oblique warning that the archduke might meet with a mishap on his visit to Bosnia, or, if better informed, failed to act on the information. No protective measures were taken; Franz Ferdinand went to his doom. Indeed, there was further Serbian involvement with the conspirators before the assassination: the Serbian crown prince, Alexander, had met with one of the killers in Belgrade. Who had conceived and directed the operation? The culprit was none other than the chief of military intelligence, Colonel Dragutin Dimitrievich, a hardened terrorist and Russia's chief catspaw

in the Balkans. As a young captain Dimitrievich had taken part in the murder of Serbia's royal couple eleven years before. Later he would scheme to assassinate Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II as well as the kings of Bulgaria and Greece. In the pay of Russia's ambassador, Hartwig, Dimitrievich doubled as the creator and leader of the secret Black Hand, which carried out the bloody work of Serbia and Serbia's Russian puppetmasters against Austria-Hungary.

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In the immediate aftermath of the attack the Austrians suspected the role of the Serbian government, but nothing of possible Russian involvement. Through prudence, but also out of weakness, precious weeks were spent in a painstaking investigation of the crime, as far as was possible given its origins across the border. Had Austria, virtually certain of Serbia's involvement, demanded an explanation after a few days, when European indignation was still at a fever pitch over the grisly crime, it could have easily brought the little Balkan state to heel without protest from the great powers. For provocations a hundred times less flagrant the British had shelled Copenhagen in 1801 and 1807. When France's envoy to Algiers was swatted with the dey's fan in 1830, the French landed troops and annexed the country. Vienna, however, was a capital of prating old men and dandified poltroons. Its emperor, Franz Josef, who still commanded vast respect and had immense influence, was a worn-out old wraith, no longer politically competent. Franz Josef's foreign minister, Count Leopold von Berchtold von and zu Ungarisch, felt out of place as a diplomat or politician. Life to his taste was an endless round of plays and concerts, frivolous salons, visits to the races or rare book shops. Seldom seen without his high silk hat, he was a fastidious dresser as well as an avid scholar of the Greek classics. A shrewd observer wrote of him: "He was sincerely devoted to the country he served disastrously and with all the wisdom he could muster." Count Berchtold, like his counterpart at the head of the Austro- Hungarian Imperial Army, General Conrad von Hötzendorff, a militarist fire-eater without the slightest hint of diplomacy, was all for chastizing the Serbs. Neither, however, could overcome the Austrian inertia. The first step Austria was able to take came almost a week after the shooting, when Franz Josef wrote to the German emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm II, on July 4, 1914, asking to consult with him before taking any measures against Serbia.

Wilhelm II, intelligent but neurotic, was a capricious individual. Inclined to annotate state documents submitted to him with vindictive interjections ("Toads! Crows! Jesuits!"), he often played the ham actor in transitory political melodramas, which, however, concluded without ill effect. At Berlin on June 28 he had received the news of Franz Ferdinand's death with horror, for the two men were good friends. He replied to Franz Josef's note that he stood ready to fulfill his obligations as Austria's ally if it should emerge that Serbia had abetted or protected the assassins. Nevertheless, Wilhelm II had no intention of leading the German Empire into a European war, nor of expanding the incident outside the confines of the west Balkans.

The Kaiser, represented so often since as a hysterical ogre determined to crush everything in his path, was at the time so little disposed to prepare for war that he left on July 6 for a three-week cruise on his yacht, the Hohenzollern, bound for the Norwegian coast. Likewise, his ministers were off on vacation: von Jagow, the foreign minister, off on his honeymoon; von Moltke, the chief of staff, taking the cure at Carlsbad; Admiral von Tirpitz relaxing at Tarasp in Switzerland. The kings of Saxony and Bavaria had departed their capitals for their country estates. Nor had the Kaiser or his ministers put in motion any preparatory measures before they left. There were no provisions for the stockpiling of grain: not a single ton of flour was purchased by Germany in July 1914. Indeed, even the leaders of the German opposition had left Berlin.

While the Kaiser and his government had little motive and less desire to plunge Europe into a fratricidal war, feelings were different among the leaders of France. Frenchmen still smarted at Germany's annexation of Alsace and part of Lorraine in 1871. At the Place de la Concorde in Paris, the statues of Metz and Strasbourg remained covered with crepe. In 1914, I was just a boy of eight, born in the Belgian Ardennes across the border from France. Even there, in long, silent valleys remote from almost everywhere, the story of Alsace-Lorraine gripped our emotions. At the sight of the swallows returning from the south in springtime, we sang " 'Tis a bird that comes from France," just as did the Alsatian children in their Prussian exile. Like the Frenchmen, we thought of Alsace-Lorraine with sorrow, of the Germans with rancor: the accursed Prussians would have to surrender it, even if it took force. Germany, driving toward world economic and political power, its population growing by 600,000 each year, was little concerned with lording it over the French. Bismarck himself had never been enthusiastic about the annexation, and his successors were prepared to make concessions to France. Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, imperial chancellor in 1912, had offered to the French ambassador in Berlin that year, Jules Cambon, to negotiate with France as to the neutrality and complete autonomy of Alsace-Lorraine, but had been haughtily rejected. France's ill will was manifest. The Germans preferred to delude themselves by hoping that time would salve France's wounds.

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The official British reaction to the crime at Sarajevo was more guarded. The chief concern of Britain's imperial establishment was the steady growth of the German navy and merchant fleet, which Wilhelm II had been building up single-mindedly (in contrast to the prudence that would later be exercised by Hitler, who agreed in 1935 to limit the German fleet to 35 per cent of the Royal Navy). In truth, for the English public, Belgrade, let alone Sarajevo, was an unknown. For Londoners Singapore, Hong Kong, even the Falkland Islands weren't far from the mouth of the Thames, but the Danube was a wild and unknown river at the end of the civilized world (just as Czechoslovakia was for Neville Chamberlain in 1938 "a remote country of which we know little").

In Belgrade, Prime Minister Pashich, with no small hypocrisy, caused a solemn

Mass to be celebrated in memory of the departed archduke and his consort. With tears in his eyes, he beseeched the Almighty to receive with kindness His two servants, Franz Ferdinand and Sophie. So cynical did this pose appear that the French minister at Belgrade, Descos, refused to attend. Descos had long been suspicious of the intrigues of the Serbian government. He had observed the rapid growth of Serbia's army, which had doubled in size in the preceding year as tens of thousands of Macedonians were drafted into its ranks. Who was it who threatened the country? The French ambassador had observed the corrupt business by which millions of gold francs in low-interest loans had flowed from France to Serbia, after the way had been prepared by Serbian bribes of influential Frenchmen, above all in the press. The French senator Humbert, publisher of Le Journal, personally received a 15 per cent commission on a big order of military footgear sold to Belgrade. Such an outlay demanded drastic economies in production: cardboard soles were substituted for leather, and the Serbian army would make its catastrophic retreat in 1915 barefooted. The case of Senator Humbert was not an isolated one. Descos, already disgusted by these goings-on, requested to be relieved as ambassador: the hypocritical Mass for the dead had been the last straw. At the same time, Pashich had requested his recall, and Descos left Belgrade a disillusioned man.

Meanwhile, the Austrians were continuing their investigation of the Sarajevo attack. After learning the identity of Ciganovich, Austrian investigators quickly learned, courtesy of the Serbian government, that the plotter in question had mysteriously vanished. In Pashich's laconic phrase, "He departed for an unknown destination on the 28th of June." He would not surface for more than a year. The ire of the Austrians grew slowly. Only after three weeks did the Austrian ambassador at Belgrade, Herr Giesl, appear before the Pashich government to present Austria's demand that a committee of inquiry be set up, to include representatives of both nations. The Austrians couched their demands in harsh terms. First they stipulated an unequivocal Serbian condemnation of the assassination; second, a serious investigation of the crime, to include Austrian representatives. The Serbian government naturally resisted. It was not merely a matter of Serbia's sovereignty, as Prime Minister Pashich claimed. As he himself was to confide to Dragomir Stefanovich, his secretary for foreign affairs (as well as his stepson): "If we accept this inquiry, they will catch us red-handed." In the face of Austria's demands, Pashich did something almost unbelievable. He didn't merely procrastinate, or stonewall: he fled. Every detail of this strange story has become known. When Ambassador Giesl presented himself at the Serbian Ministry for Foreign Affairs on July 23rd, bearing an official envelope for the prime minister, his secretary told the emissary tersely, "He has gone." Asked where, the secretary replied, "To the country." It was impossible to reach him by telephone, according to the official, so the Austrian had no choice but to deposit his ultimatum with the secretary. Meanwhile, Pashich was in Nish, eighty miles to the south. Appraised of the Austrian demand, Pashich, rather than return to Belgrade at once, jumped on a train that very afternoon and headed south for Salonika, in order to, as he told several friends accompanying

him, "spend a few days there to rest incognito." As George Malcolm Thomson summed up the wily politician's behavior, "Pashish intended to be 'out of touch' during the critical period when the ultimatum was accepted or rejected, both of those courses equally dangerous for him." In Belgrade, however, the prince regent, Alexander, saw Pashich's responsibilities differently. He had the stationmaster at Nish telegraphed to order the prime minister's immediate return. Still Pashich persisted, boarding the train and continuing south. An hour's run down the line, the train was stopped, and Pashich again ordered to return to Belgrade at once. After several more hours of evasion, Pashich finally was able to screw up his resolve and head back to his capital. On his arrival at Belgrade Station, at five o'clock on the morning of the twenty-fourth, Pashich, shaggy-bearded and glassy-eyed, did something quite revealing. Rather than report to the regent, he headed directly for the Russian embassy. It was clear where the real power in Serbia resided.

* * *

Russia, no more than Serbia, could afford to risk a thorough-going investigation of the Sarajevo conspiracy. As the tsarist empire's minister of foreign affairs, Sazonov, declared on July 24, on learning of Austria's formal demand, "This means war in Europe." He was instantly seconded by France's ambassador to Russia, Maurice Paléologue, who hastened to Sazonov bearing President Poincaré's injunction to "Be firm! We must be firm!" On the twenty-fourth Prince Alexander, the Serbian regent, sent the tsar an anguished appeal. The Russian response would reveal its committment to its Serbian stalking horse-or its lack of commitment. After a few hours, the telegram arrived. Pashich opened it with trembling hands. He quickly read it, and then exclaimed, "The good, the great, the gracious tsar!" Serbia would not have to atone for its misdeed if Russia could help it.

On the following day, Austria's Herr Giesl again presented himself at the prime minister's office, a little before six in the evening. Pashich was there and he answered a firm no to Austria's ultimatum. The refusal was couched in refined diplomatic terms, and even offered several concessions, but the Serbs weren't ready to allow Austrian officials to conduct an inquiry on Serbian territory, even with the participation of the Serbs. The Austrian ambassador politely took up his bowler hat and left to board the six-thirty train for Vienna. Diplomatic relations had been broken off. War was in the wind.

Ironically, three years later, for his own political purposes, Pashich would stage a showy inquiry and trial of the military men who had organized the assassination, a trial which would end in the execution of Colonel Dimitrievich and his henchmen. At that time, in 1917, Pashich, his armies having been swept from the Danube to the Adriatic, after suffering 300,000 dead, would hit on the idea of a reconciliation with Austria-Hungary, now headed by a new emperor, Karl L Although Karl I was not adverse to a settlement, the whole affair would come to nothing more than the end of Dimitrievich and his confederates and a grim revelation of the cynicism of the Serbian leader. Had Dimitrievich confessed in

1914, as he did in 1917, the Pashich government would doubtless have fallen. Neither Serbia, nor Europe, would be in ruins, however, as they were in 1917. As Dimitrievich would reveal before his death, the real director of the conspiracy had been Russia's military attaché, Colonel Victor Artmanov, who had told Dimitrievich in the early stages: "Go ahead. If attacked, you will not stand alone." In his testimony, Dimitrievich revealed that Artmanov had financed the plotters, and that he had not carried out the scheme until he had the Russian's final go-ahead. As for Artmanov, he had left Belgrade well before June 28, the day of the killings. On that day he was in Zurich, and he continued a leisurely journey across Switzerland and Italy, all the while keeping a meticulous journal which would enable him to account for his time on any given day.

In St. Petersburg, the tsarist government made haste to prepare for war. On July 7, 1914 two weeks before Austria's demands were delivered to Serbia orders had been issued to move troops from Serbia to European Russia. By the 25th they were already billeted in the military district of Moscow. Had Austria been able to interrogate Dimitrievich with the dispatch later exercised by Pashich's men, she would have learned quickly that the Sarajevo affair and its rectification were no mere spat between its own sizeable forces and little Serbia, but that a five-million man army from Europe's most populous state stood ready to oppose the Habsburg empire by force.

After Dimitrievich's death (which several of the powers had tried to unsuccessfully to stop: Pashich couldn't tolerate that he still lived and talked), his memory faded for a quarter of a century, until it was revived and honored by Tito (Josip Broz), another terrorist, who modestly promoted himself to marshal. Dimitrievich became a national hero, as one of the martyrs of the future Yugoslavia. The man who fired the shots, Gavrilo Princip, has been similarly honored, and a monument now marks the spot where he stood and took aim in Sarajevo. Thus was Austria-Hungary lured into the trap that became the greatest and most destructive war war the world had seen. The next step for the Russian provocateurs would be to draw Germany into the trap. By July 31, 1914, this, too, would be a *fait accompli.*

Chapter 3

The German Dynamo

The average person in the West - whether European, American, or what have you - has long taken for granted that Kaiser Wilhelm II bears the chief responsibility for the First World War. After all, at the end of the war, it was a so otherwise reasonable man as Britain's Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who, with victory in sight, announced that he and his allies would "Hang the kaiser!" Later Lloyd George would promise the House of Commons that the imperial culprit would first be driven through the streets of London in an iron cage, a promise which enabled him to win the elections of February 1919 handily.

Although Lloyd George and the mobs he appealed to, as well as Britain's allies and the revolutionary successors to Wilhelm's rule in Germany were cheated of their desire, Wilhelm's reputation was effectively hanged by the war propaganda of the day, and has remained on the gallows thanks to the writings of Establishment historians.

Such has been the stultifying effect of this propaganda that, although large numbers of people still believe the German emperor to have been a particularly baneful species of ogre, not one person in a thousand knows anything of Kaiser Wilhelm's actions in those times. The impression remains that eight million men died in the abattoirs of Flanders and Galicia thanks to the Kaiser alone.

The Versailles Treaty, which affirmed Germany's sole guilt for the war, could never have been imposed, of course, without the central thesis of Wilhelm II's villainy. One doubt about Wilhelm's alleged war plotting and the whole fradulent document would lose its force.

* * *

In fact, what role did Wilhelm II play in the outbreak of the war?

Truth to tell, on the day Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, the Kaiser hadn't been in Germany for days. He was still sailing the North Sea on his

yacht Hohenzollern, a contented vacationer. Notified of the crime at Sarajevo, he had expressed his horror, and assured Emperor Franz Josef of his full support. Nevertheless, at the time he viewed the affair as merely a local one, in which Austria-Hungary, deprived of its heir to the throne and its army commander-in-chief in one stroke, had an understandably legitimate concern. Still unaware of what the Austrians would learn in their interrogation of the assassins, the Kaiser departed at the beginning of July, determined to spend the entire month at sea.

Had that impulsive ruler really wished to ignite a European war, he surely would have paid more attention to putting his plans in motion. But he allowed his chief of staff, von Moltke, to continue his stay at Carlsbad, while Admiral Tirpitz, commander of the navy, whiled away his leave at Tarasp.

Why, in any case, would Germany and its leader want war? By 1914, Germany had achieved economic preeminence on the Continent without firing a shot. As the French historian Lavisse remarked in an address delivered at the Sorbonne in April, 1917, referring to the years between 1871 and 1914, "At no time in history have we seen such a stupendous growth in work and wealth in any country in so little time."

Since 1870 Germany's population had increased by fifteen million people, while England held steady and France stagnated. The Germans no longer had to emigrate, for the country's prodigious growth provided work for all. The coal output had nearly doubled in the years between 1900 and 1910. The German metallurgical, chemical, and precision instrument industries were the best in the world. Everywhere German products commanded admiration, and its exports had doubled between 1910 and 1913, reaching a total of ten billion marks in that year.

These goods traveled to far-off places China and the Americas in German ships, for the merchant marine had entered the era of its greatest expansion, and the imperial colors waved over the seven seas.

German expansion was all the more impressive in that it was carried out in several decades without military conquest, a remarkably pacific expansion when compared to the bloody rise of such imperial powers as Britain and France, not to mention America, which gained its share of territory from Mexico. The quality of Germany's product and the efficiency of German commercial agents won fearful jealousy, especially among the lords of British imperialism. As the eminent French historian Pierre Renouvin testified:

> From 1900 on, Germany has had marked success. Thanks to the initiative of her commercial travelers, who endeavor to be aware of the new needs of their customers and to satisfy their tastes, and thanks to the easy terms that the exporters offer to their buyers, German commerce is in the process of taking the lead over British commerce in Holland, where Rotterdam is in effect an appendage of

> the Rhineland; in Belgium, where part of the business of Antwerp is in the hands of 40,000 Germans; in Italy, which buys metallurgical and chemical products from Germany; in Russia, where the Germans have the advantage of proximity and better knowledge of the country; and even in Serbia. The margin of superiority that the British trade has in the markets of France, Spain, and the Ottoman Empire is constantly diminishing.
>
> The English producer and exporter is annoyed at everywhere coming up against these German tradesmen who do them out of a sale. The economic rivalry fosters a bad climate in public opinion that can not fail to have an effect on political relations. (*La crise européenne*, p. 142)

Until then, the seas had been the almost private domain of the British Empire for two centuries, world commerce a British monopoly throughout the nineteenth century. Both Spain and France had been soundly thrashed for failing to accede to Britain's supremacy with good grace. Philip II of Spain and France's Napoleon had seen their dreams sunk along with their fleets by the Royal Navy.

Wilhelm II, by having the audacity to construct a merchant fleet able to service 70 percent of Germany's overseas trade, called forth the wrath of an arrogant monopoly, which twenty years later even Hitler would shrink from antagonizing. The queen of England expressed the Establishment's view when she complained that "William II is playing at Charlemagne."

For the most part, the British leadership was reluctant to give vent to its misgivings at the rise of Germany's industry and fleet. The Germans, for their part, cherished the hope that they could arrange matters with the British in some kind of gentleman's agreement.

The British response, however, was not encouraging, particularly on the matter of German colonial expansion to siphon off some of its burgeoning population. Every such effort was jealously opposed by Great Britain. Small neighbors such as Belgium or Holland could possess huge empires sixty or eighty times the size of the metropolitan territory; after all, they had long been considered to be Britain's dutiful satellites. Germany was a powerful rival.

That to effectively compete with the rising German economy required nothing more than that the United Kingdom manufacture products as well-made and as inexpensive as those of the Reich was lost on the British. Challenged, they felt threatened.

Solitary, haughty, and brusque, the British set about looking for allies against the German "menace." In 1904 Britain began a rapprochement with her hereditary enemy, France, when both nations had concluded the Entente Cordiale, which in reality would always remain the Mésentente Cordiale. Nevertheless, the fact that the ponderous John Bull and the light- limbed Marianne had opened the dance marked a turning point in history. It would take the double

disaster for the British Establishment of two disastrous world wars in this century to drive home the recognition that its world monopoly had at last ended, superseded by the uneasy condominium of the United States of America and the Soviet Union.

* * *

Despite an abortive British offer of Portuguese Angola to Germany in exchange for their discontinuing the build-up of their fleet, made in 1912, Wilhelm II refused to be dissuaded, and the shipwrights continued their work. This didn't mean that the Kaiser was striving for war, however. Indeed in 1905 he concluded a fraternal agreement with his erstwhile Russian rival the tsar, on his own initiative, while vacationing on his yacht off Denmark.

The tsar was by nature a gentle soul, dripping with good intentions. But he was weak-willed and neurotic, and he was constantly surrounded by a guard of Pan-Slav activists, bellicose grand dukes, and shadowy wire- pullers and manipulators of all sorts. Despite Wilhelm's intent to draw France into his cordial understanding with Russia, interests inimical to a Russian-German detente around the tsar succeeded in torpedoing the agreement within four months. The anti-German Franco-Russian entente of 1894 continued in force, and the Russian imperialists eyed Bohemia (in Austria-Hungary) and Galicia more greedily than ever. For their part, the French, bolstered by the hope of the support of Russia's massive army, schemed to retake Alsace-Lorraine.

Chapter 4

Ambition and Revanche

The French Republic had been obsessed with the loss of Alsace-Lorraine since 1871. At the National Assembly in Bordeaux in that year, Victor Hugo had trumpeted his undying allegiance to the cause of the lost territories. After him Déroulède, Barras, and Bourget led the literary chorus of revenge.

Noble as the French protest may have been, it didn't take much history into account - particularly that of its own country. France had been quite skillful in the past at annexing the territories of its neighbors. After all, how had Nord, Dunkirk, Lille, Arras, and Douai, all bearing the Germanic eagle on their escutcheons, become united with France? The same went for Roussillon, originally part of Catalonia, as well as Burgundy and Verdun, a German cathedral town until 1552. Toul had only become French in 1648, at the Treaty of Westphalia.

Alsace and Lorraine themselves had been acquired in the not too distant past. Lorraine had been German for a millennium. Almost 400 years before, Emperor Charles V had dreamed of making it a free and inalienable state, a buffer between France and Germany. The French had had other aspirations, however. In 1633 the French captured Nancy; one hundred thirty-three years later the remainder of Lorraine was seized and annexed. When the Germans retook the province in 1870, it had been French scarely more than a century.

The case was similar with Alsace. In 843 the Treaty of Verdun had made it part of Lotharingia. Twenty-seven years later, at the Treaty of Mersen, it had become the territory of Louis the German. From the twelfth to the fifteenth century it had been part of the Duchy of Swabia, and it had enjoyed a flourishing growth. Not until 1679, after French troops led by Marshal Turenne had bested the forces of the German Empire, did the Treaty of Nijmegen acknowledge French sovereignty over Alsace. Strasbourg would remain German until 1681, and the sizeable city of Mulhouse did not fall to France until it was seized in 1798.

To be sure, the last born - or the last stolen - is often the most beloved. Such was the story with Alsace-Lorraine. And there is no doubt that Alsace- Lorraine

would have played a healthier role in European history if it had formed the core of a buffer state between the two rivals, rather than the jousting field of their armies for a thousand years.

Germany under Kaiser Wilhelm II had at length come to realize that the issue of the "lost provinces" was an impassable barrier to Franco-German reconciliation, and in 1911 Germany had granted autonomy, within the Reich, to Alsace-Lorraine. This despite evidence of growing acceptance of German rule among the population of the provinces, to such an extent that the French historian Renouvin was forced to admit:

> The citizens of Alsace-Lorraine are aware of the material advantages which accrue to them from the general prosperity of Germany; they no longer accept protest deputies, but send representatives to the Reichstag who take their seats with the German parties, both Catholic and socialist. (*La crise européenne*, p. 138)

Not only with regard to Alsace-Lorraine, but in colonial matters as well, Germany had sought to appease France, but the French government had remained obdurate. Having conceded France control of Morocco in 1906, Germany received in return a thin strip of unproductive land in Equatorial Africa. Moreover, France's new British allies had exerted pressure on Spain to refuse Germany authorization to lay a submarine cable through the Canary Islands to establish telephone communication to the Central African colonies.

Undaunted, the German government had offered France close cooperation in 1912, as France's President Poincaré would later admit before the Chamber of Deputies in 1922: "It is beyond question that during the entire year of 1912 Germany made sincere efforts to ally herself with us for the common interest of Europe and the maintenance of peace," then adding, "but she wasn't ready yet."

There, then, was the truth. No matter how eager Germany showed herself to make concessions, as long as Alsace and Lorraine were not under the French tricolor there would be no rapprochement. Had other countries dealt with France in a like manner there would have been no reconciliation with Spain until France had ceded Perpignan back to Catalonia; no reconciliation with Belgium until France had returned the Nord region to its Belgo-Flemish fatherland. For the reconquest of its lost borderlands, however, France looked not for reconciliation but for military strength.

The alliance which France concluded with the Russian Empire in 1894 was a strange one. Paris and St. Petersburg were more than a thousand miles apart, a huge distance in those days before aviation. The French people and the peoples of the tsarist empire differed immensely. For the preceeding century the two nations' only meaningful contacts had been as enemies, when NapoLéon had led his Grande Armée to Moscow in 1812 and when the French Zouaves had helped British troops occupy the Crimea in 1854.

For the moment, however, France and Russia's interests, or at least those of the ruling political elites, coincided. The French Republic needed several million extra soldiers, and Russia had them. Russia needed billions of gold francs to finance its Pan-Slavist and Far Eastern projects, and France was willing to supply them.

Neither party was naive about the implications of the deal. The French politicians felt no fondness for the tsarist autocracy, nor did the Pan-Slav Russian grand dukes have any regard for what they called France's "mobocracy." Yet the military ties grew increasingly closer, with formal and regular collaboration between the general staffs, joint military reviews, and visits exchanged by the two fleets. The shabby bargain would soon bear fruit.

France's drift toward open hostilities with Germany was strengthened by domestic political developments. In 1913 Raymond Poincaré, who had been minister of foreign affairs, was elected president of the French Republic. When Poincaré took over the Elysée Palace from President Faillières at the start of that year, Faillières is reported to have said, "I'm afraid that war is entering the Elysée behind me." In George Malcolm Thomson's view, "It is certain that the Lorrainer Poincaré felt no repugnance for war."

There had been opponents of France's party of revanche, some of them with great influence. Joseph Caillaux, a former prime minister and minister of finance, was a powerful politician whom Poincaré feared greatly as a rival. Jean Jaurès, the fiery socialist orator and pacifist, could rouse the masses like no other French politician. With Poincaré firmly in power, however, their voices were powerless to affect the French government's military and diplomatic machinations.

Poincaré was not a warm man; neither was he an eloquent or conciliatory one. He was rail thin, with the eyes of a stuffed owl. I knew him personally in my youth. I was astounded, on meeting him, at his shrill voice. He seemed a cold little man, his cheeks puffed out in congenital ill temper. With whiskers like an iron-gray shaving brush, he seemed a sly fox. He mistrusted other people and they mistrusted him. A lifelong hairsplitter, he crammed his political and diplomatic activity, his confidences, his parliamentary replies, and his memoirs with so many lies, subterfuges, evasions, and bits of nonsense that the sheer weight of it all was overpowering.

He seems to have been honest in his personal financial conduct, a rare virtue among men in politics, finance, and the press, who usually wallow in moral turpitude. Yet his dirty tricks in politics were numberless, and one can only wish he had mulcted a few hundred million francs from the public treasury rather than sent a million and a half Frenchmen to their deaths in the bloodbath of the First World War.

Poincaré could not seek war openly and officially, although secretly he strove for it with all his might. When the war came, he later said, it was a "divine surprise". Charles de Gaulle, who, with his hawk's eye, had no equal in looking

into the subconscious of his fellow Frenchmen, wrote in La France et son armée: "He did not watch the tragedy approaching without a secret hope."

In 1912, however, Poincaré was unwilling to commit himself to the Balkan adventures of the Russian Pan-Slavists. He couldn't mistake Belgrade or Sarajevo for Strasbourg. That suited the Russians and they went to considerable effort to conceal their intrigues from their French allies.

In March 1912, unbeknownst to the French, Russia's ambassador and virtual plenipotentiary in Belgrade, Nicholas de Hartwig, had drafted the secret clauses of the treaty between Serbia and Bulgaria which stipulated the number of Bulgarian troops that were to be placed at Serbia's disposal in the event of a war with Austria-Hungary.

Poincaré was irked by his ally's secretiveness, particularly when his ambassadors could only elicit hypocritical denials from their Russian colleagues. Poincaré for a time remained poorly informed about Russia's Balkan moves, even more so than their mutual German enemy. He was kept in the dark about Russia's provisional redrawing of the borders of its satellite states in the Balkans prefatory to the wars of 1912 and 1913. Despite his caustic objections when he learned the truth, the president of France had to swallow the Russians' galling explanations as if they were after-dinner mints.

In 1913, after finally obtaining the text of a secret treaty between Russia and Bulgaria, he murmured to Sergei Sazonov, the Russian foreign minister: "I call to Monsieur Sazonov's attention that the treaty is a covenant of war not only against Turkey but also against Austria." (Poincaré, *Les Balkans en feu*, p. 113)

Sazonov responded in three words: "I must agree," but was no more forthcoming with information about Russia's aims in the Balkans.

The new president made every effort not only to prevent Franco-German understanding but also to antagonize Austria-Hungary, which, in his opinion, was too well disposed toward France. For example, Poincaré had personally managed to torpedo a loan applied for on the Bank of France by the Austrians, who had an impeccable financial reputation. The French had previously lent out forty-five billion gold francs, one third of the total to Russia, on most generous terms. Serbia too had enjoyed a bit of this French largesse. Regardless of the fact that extending the loan to Austria would have greatly heightened French influence in the great Central European power, Poincaré was determined to give offense to that Teutonic ally of the hated Germans.

With the same churlish calculation Poincaré went out of his way to offend Wilhelm II. In early 1914, after Wilhelm had graciously invited the French minister, Aristide Briand, to a regatta at Kiel, Poincaré forbade Briand to attend, decreeing that "an interview of that kind is disturbing and outrageous."

Poincaré's diplomats on the spot repeatedly informed Paris of Germany's benevolent intentions toward France. At Berlin, Ambassador Cambon telegraphed

Paris a confidence made him by Baron Beyens, the Belgian minister to Germany: "One fact that is absolutely certain is that the German chancellor wishes to avoid a European conflagration at any cost."

The brilliant socialist leader, Marcel Sambat, underlined Wilhelm II's essential caution in his book *Faites la paix ou faites un roi*: "The German emperor has braved ridicule and even the reproach of cowardice for twenty- five years."

As Russia continued to step up its intrigues in the Balkans, Paris grew better informed. Serbia was intensifying preparations against Austria. A coded dispatch dated March 28, 1914, was sent to his government by the French military attache at Sofia, reporting remarks that Ferdinand, King of Bulgaria, had made to his military leaders the previous day: "Let's not interfere with Serbia. Already the Serbs think they're big enough to defeat Austria. Before six months are up, they will attack her in alliance with Russia."

The French government was clearly unconcerned about the prospect of an Austro-Serbian war three months before Sarajevo. Rather than seek to mediate, France busily supplied Serbia with the credit to build up its stocks of arms and material. A big French loan in September 1913 provided the impetus. French money not only armed the Serbs, it made Serbian leaders wealthy.

As an example of the corruption spawned by the Franco-Serb-Russian politico-financial nexus, consider the affair of the Mauser rifles. On November 29, 1913, the secretary general of the minister of foreign affairs, Dragomir Stefanovich, drafted this letter to the French financier and press czar (Le Temps), Edgar Roels:

> Gentlemen:
>
> The matter of the rifles is urgent. Please consider it of the utmost urgency. Please tell me the earliest possible date the factory can complete the order. The price of the rifles can go as high as 80 francs apiece. (The commissions must be included in the price.) As I've told you, we are talking exclusively about the Mauser 7mm 1910 model. Since Mauser is in a cartel with the Austrian Steyr Works, we have misgivings about placing the order with Mauser here, as it will ultimately be Steyr which manufactures the guns, and it will be impossible to obtain the rifles if political conditions become complicated. That happened previously, in 1908. The shipment in question must be paid for from the proceeds of the loan made in France. Under no circumstances must anything be said to Mauser.

The Mauser rifles purchased by Paris arrived in February and March, 1914, in Serbia. For their troubles, the following Serbian dignitaries received commissions: Prime Minister Pashich, 4.5 to 5 per cent, depending on the purchase; Voivod Putnik got 3 per cent; the court grand marshal and the finance marshal each received a 1 per cent commission; and Serbia's generalissmo made out with 2 percent.

Such was the level of indecency reached by this sort of looting that after the war the Yugoslavian Democratic Socialist Party would be able to accuse Nicholas Pashich of personally having stolen a million gold francs given by Russia to Serbia. The Socialists would also accuse the former Serbian minister to Paris, M.R. Vesnich, of having made off with another million in gold francs that had been authorized during the war for the care of the Serbian wounded.

The Russians also set to work to draw Romania into the toils of her anti-Austrian agitation, for Romania was a crucial ally of Austria-Hungary, bound to her in a treaty that dated back to 1883.

Grand Duke Nicholas, uncle of the tsar, one of the most determined of the Pan-Slav warmongers, came to Bucharest to corrupt both the Romanian government and the royal family. He had immediate success with the Romanian prime minister, Take Ionescu. As Dragomir Stefanovich later revealed in his Memoirs and Documents of a Serbian Diplomat:

In December 1912, Take Ionescu met twice with Grand Duke Nicholas in the presence of our chargé d'affaires at the Russian legation. It was in the course of the second of these conversations that a definite amount was set for the allowance which would thereafter be paid to the Romanian statesman as the price of the assistance he proposed to lend to Russia's anti-Austrian propaganda. The sum was to be 5,000 gold francs each month.

Take Ionescu guaranteed the Grand Duke Nicholas that in the event of an Austro-Russian conflict, he and his friends, supported by the principal military leaders in particular by Generals Filipescu and Averescu would make it impossible for King Carol and his pro-German ministers to fulfill the obligations of the treaty of alliance linking Romania and the Austrian government since 1883.

lonescu's predecessor as prime minister, Marchiloman, managed to obtain and publish photographs of Ionescu's receipts. Ionescu, it was revealed, had also been subsidized by secret funds from Italy. And Ionescu himself had been subsidizing the French daily, Le Temps, and its agency in the Balkans: this money, of course, having come from the Russians, who themselves were being funded with huge French loans.

Stefanovich noted in his memoirs: "As far as we personally [the Serbian foreign ministry] were concerned, we were assured from January 1913 on that when the decisive moment came, Romania would march with us against Austria-Hungary."

The Germans were quick to catch on to the Russians' activity in Romania. In January, 1913, the German minister to Bucharest telegraphed Berlin: "The number of secret agents and spies that Russia has maintained in Romania for some months now is becoming prodigious. They are all concentrating their efforts on stirring up the country against Austria. I ask myself what they are driving at."

In his turn, the German ambassador in Athens, Count Kuadt, telegraphed on March 1, 1913: "Russian propaganda is seeping down to the bottommost strata of the Romanian population." The Russians, who according to Ambassador Tschirschky, the German envoy to Austria-Hungary, had amassed a slush fund of a million rubles with which to bribe the Romanians, were ably seconded in their work by the French ambassador to Bucharest, Blondel. Blondel invited a steady stream of French politicians and journalists to Romania to spread the anti-Austro-Hungarian gospel, among them André Tardieu of *Le Temps*.

Tardieu was, in Paris, the close confidant of the Russian ambassador, Alexander Izvolsky, who wrote his foreign minister, Sazonov, in 1912, "I have an interview with Monsieur Tardieu every other day." Tardieu was a slippery and unscrupulous dealer who had intrigued with a German diplomat in Paris to set up an illegal rubber consortium in the Congo, which would have brought him millions through frontmen, until the financial watchdog of the French assembly, Joseph Caillaux, had blown the whistle.

Six months before Sarajevo, Tardieu was authorized to offer the Romanians Transylvania, a part of Austria-Hungary, in exchange for their cooperation. Publicly and provocatively Tardieu delivered a lecture titled "Transylvania is Romania's Alsace-Lorraine" in Bucharest.

On June 24, four days before the assassination of the archduke and his wife, Take Ionescu telegraphed Tardieu in code:

> "Agreement in principle all points satisfactory common interests concluded yesterday following conversation with Sazonov, Bratianu. On basis recognition our claims to Transylvania, Banat, Bukovina. Stop. All comments at present inopportune, letter follows by legation courier."

On the same day the Russian endorsed the French guarantees to Romania.

Later France's Georges Clemenceau would declare, “Of all the swine in the war, the Romanians were the most swinish.” Perhaps this is a questionable judgment: there was swinishness all around at the time, particularly in the Balkans.

Chapter 5

Poincaré and Caillaux

As determined as the French politicians were to make war, it was still necessary for them to stampede the mass of Frenchmen in the direction of war. Here politicians like Poincaré found the covert aid of Russian agents invaluable.

It was a strange but mutually beneficial arrangement. The Russians subsidized the French newspapers, which plumped for military and financial support of Russia, enabling the Russians to dispose of even more funds for bribery. The warmongers in French politics reaped the rewards of the endless press drumbeat of hostility against the Central Powers, Germany and Austria. There was little difficulty in finding newspapermen of sufficient venality to allow their headlines and editorials to be scripted by a foreign power. In fact, the problem for the Russians was to pick and choose from among the throng which crowded forward, hungry for bribes.

Arthur Raffalovich, the Russian finance minister's delegate in France, reported back to his prime minister, Count Witte, "Since it is impossible to buy everybody, it will be necessary to make a selection." He added, "Every day you learn to despise someone else."

From the outset in 1912, the Russian bribemasters ladled out hundreds of thousands of gold francs. An ever-increasing tempo of subventions soared to three hundred and fifty thousand gold francs per month. The total outlay finally reached the tens of millions.

After the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917, they published secret documents revealing the extent as well as the particulars of the shabby business, among them another Raffalovich telegram, this one to Ambassador Izvolsky: "You will deliver this money by means of confidential direct payments person to person in recompense for the cooperation accorded you in *Le Temps*, *L'Eclair*, and *Echo de Paris*." (February 26, 1913)

One of Poincaré's allies wrote, of the publications in the pay of the Pan-Slavists, "An abominable list, where we see lumped together in the same activity and

the same disgrace *Le Figaro* of Gaston Calmette, the *Radical*, the *Journal des Débats*, Henri Letellier's *Journal*, *La République Francaise*, *Le Matin*, *L' Echo de Paris*, and *L'Eclair*; and dominating all the rest of the future peace negotiator and future president of the council of ministers, the foreign bureau chief of *Le Temps*: André Tardieu."

Tardieu, whom we have just seen at work in Romania, had been a particular feather in the Russian cap. Several years before, his paper had been quite sympathetic to Austria-Hungary; in a letter to St. Petersburg dated February 16, 1911, Izvolsky wrote: "In the newspaper *Le Temps*, Monsieur Tardieu makes use of every opportunity to show the Franco-Russian rapport in an unfavorable light."

A year later, the ambassador could write: "M. Tardieu has lost no time putting his pen at my disposal."

The Serbian government was not slow to enter the bribery game after the example of their Russian patrons. As Dragomir Stefanovich revealed, the Serbs provided key French newspapers with upwards of one and a half million gold francs in the two years before Sarajevo, "little gratuities," in the words of Prime Minister Pashich. Serbian funds set up the influential Balkan agency of Le Temps, run by the ubiquitous Tardieu, which supplied French papers with a good ninety percent of their material from the Balkans. Russia's minister to Serbia, Hartwig, played a role in its direction, and the agency possessed its own code, which not even the French government could decipher. In the face of this bought-and-paid-for press onslaught, the French public could not long remain unswayed. As one of Clemenceau's colleagues later wrote:

The most audacious claptrap and the most shameless lies, once they had been published and commented on by Le Temps, Echo de Paris, and the Journal des Débats - which at that time were considered by our ruling classes to be truly and scrupulously informed organs of the press, and hence worthy of complete confidence - were copied by all the provincial newspapers. They were taken for gospel by millions of both lower and upper middle class citizens, by retired persons, by workers and by peasants, who for twenty years saw their savings go in loans to Russia, 'friend and ally,' while waiting to sacrifice their lives for her.

Poincaré did nothing to obstruct the plans of the Russians to subvert France's free press. When Izvolsky had come to him in 1912 with an outline of his plan for corrupting the French press through bribery, he was quickly able to overcome his misgivings. Izvolsky's agent, one Davidoff, handled affairs with Poincaré, who murmured sanctimoniously, "It will be necessary to distribute [the money] as far as possible in successive small amounts and with a great deal of prudence and discretion." Poincaré dealt with an even seamier character, Lenoir, whose job it was to hand over personally the bulging envelopes to the media masters.

Poincaré later explained rather piously that he might have met Lenoir only once, and in any case "never had occasion to talk with him." The fact that his Jewish finance minister, Klotz, soiled his hands more intimately in the sordid details

hardly cleanses Poincaré, however. Klotz, who even demanded on occasion that the Russians make payments in advance, "because of the generally difficult situation of the French cabinet," would end his career scandalously after the war in a criminal court.

Despite the public's growing sympathy for Serbia and Russia, the French masses still had no stomach for war. Poincaré's policy was deemed too militaristic, particularly when the French president wished to extend the term of military service from two to three years in 1914. Despite a heightened press campaign, fueled by more Russian funds ("Klotz," Raffalovich reported to St. Petersburg, "demands a second slice: a big campaign is necessary for the three years [legislation] to be passed"), the plan was voted down. The chief opposition to Poincaré's military plans was embodied, in the French establishment, by Joseph Caillaux. Caillaux, who died in 1944, is largely a forgotten figure today, but he was perhaps the most intelligent and competent French statesman of his time. Charles de Gaulle considered him the first European statesman to understand the essential role of the economy in public life. Like his adversary Poincaré, he was tough, imperious, authoritarian. Caillaux and Poincaré were born enemies, destined to collide with one another in the course of their careers. Caillaux, unlike so many of the French, was not a die-hard anti-German. He respected Germany's military strength, and considered that the colossus across the Rhine could teach his own country important lessons about work, order, and modernization of industry. Caillaux believed that the two nations should complement each other rather than carry on a rivalry exacerbated by differences in temperament and psychology. Each had much to offer, and the two might arrive at a remarkable symbiosis. All too late many Germans and Frenchmen have come to see that Caillaux was correct. Far better that the French should have ironed out their differences with Germans of the caliber of Otto von Bismarck, or even Count von Bülow, than that Adenauer, chancellor of a truncated Germany, and de Gaulle, president of a France come far down in the world, for all its pretensions, should have buried the hatchet after eighty years of disastrous enmity. In 1914, it seemed that Caillaux stood a strong chance of winning the elections and attaining the office of president of the council of ministers, which would force Poincaré, president of the French Republic, to entrust a good deal of the business of government to him. Then what would have become of Poincaré's passionate designs for regaining Alsace and Lorraine?

Poincaré was bolstered in his struggle against Caillaux by the fact that many Frenchmen, just as adamant about the "lost" provinces, detested Caillaux for his reasonableness on the matter. At bottom the French are an extremely chauvinistic people. For them, the Belgians are the "little Belgians," who speak a strange gobbledygook. The Spanish are "semi-Africans," the English "arrant hypocrites," and the Americans scarcely better than semi-beasts. The outside world is of little interest to the French; they have no need to know it. Charles Maurras, the most French of French intellectuals, at the age of forty had never visited French-speaking Belgium but once, on an excursion trip that lasted several hours. Pierre Laval, eleven times a cabinet minister, admitted to me that he

had passed through Belgium only one time, via Liège in a sleeping car at night. To be sure, the French have seen enough of Europe in ten centuries of conquest: Brussels, Rome, Madrid, Vienna, Berlin, Moscow, twenty separate invasions of Germany. But those matters they're loath to discuss. It was on just this aversion to foreigners and inability to see the other side of a political argument that Poincaré had based his political career. He had tirelessly agitated for a policy based on revenge and military strength. Caillaux had swum against the stream of popular chauvinism, and it had gained him millions of enemies.

In the vexed matter of the three years' military term, Poincaré's advantages in playing to popular fervor bumped against the equally tenacious solicitude of many Frenchmen for their freedom and their skins. It was fine to agitate for Alsace and Lorraine in the bistros, glorious to cheer at the Bastille Day parade along the Champs Elysées ... Personal sacrifice, at the cost of life and limb, required more thought. Poincaré had to find some way to torpedo his rival. He found one in Caillaux's weakness for women. Despite his baldness, Caillaux had a winning way with the fair sex. Like many a French politician, he had cantered merrily from mistress to mistress. Indeed, as is the case with so many men in the public eye, the women ran after him. Hitler, who was quite prim in this matter, once showed me a drawer full of letters from beautiful women of all ages begging him to father a child for them. In love - NapoLéon said it well - safety lies in flight. Many a time the emperor had to take to his heels. Caillaux had not been so fleet of foot. After enjoying the charms of one of his admirers for a long time more or less in secret, he had married her. A pretty ash-blond named Henriette, who dressed stylishly. They were very much in love. Nothing really to reproach there, certainly by today's standards. And Poincaré should have been the last to snoop around this little idyll, since his own gambols with a woman somewhat less than innocent had created a sensation, particularly when his lady love, after a decidedly unvirtuous career, had demanded that she and the old anticlericalist be married in secret before an archbishop. Nor would the man who was to be Poincaré's good right arm in the Operation Petticoat directed against Caillaux, Louis Barthou, win any awards for exemplary virtue. George Malcolm Thomson has set the scene:

In the early spring days of 1914 Caillaux was a source of deep anxiety to President Poincaré. In May there would be elections; popular sentiment was running towards the Left. It would be difficult then to deny Caillaux the premiership. Caillaux, who in his boundless self-confidence believed he could strike a bargain with Germany! It would be the end of Poincaré's policy of rigid hostility to the power beyond the Rhine, of intransigence which only just stopped short of provocation. (The Twelve Days, p. 66)

Poincaré and his lieutenants devised a plan to wreck Caillaux's prospects involving, not surprisingly, the press. Le Figaro, directed by the formerly impecunious Gaston Calmette, who enjoyed lavish subsidies from the Russians (he left thirteen million francs in his will), began a campaign to destroy Caillaux with these words on May 10, 1914: "The decisive moment has now come when we must not shrink from any action, even though our morals and personal inclinations

may condemn it." In short, the newspaper had acquired Caillaux and his wife's love letters, written at the time she was his mistress. Caillaux signed himself Jo-Jo, Henriette, Ri-Ri. The letters were exactly the stuff that lovers have written one another across the ages, confessions of volcanic passion, sometimes in earnest, often believed, in any case never meant for prying eyes. On May 16, when Ri-Ri cast her eyes on Le Figaro's front page, she discovered that the first of her Jo-Jo's letters to her was the day's feature story. It was mushy stuff: no intimate details were spared. The paper announced the rest of the letters would appear in forthcoming issues. Madame Caillaux threw herself into the arms of her husband. Sobbing, she implored him, "Are you going to let these journalistic hyenas invade our boudoir?"

She had no mind to let them. After being turned away from an eminent Parisian magistrate, who shrugged his shoulders and offered, "That's the price of being in politics," she obtained a pistol, made her way to the offices of Le Figaro, where, upon gaining entrance to Calmette's office, she emptied all six bullets into her traducer. In point of fact, Madame Caillaux should have aimed higher. The now defunct Calmette had been merely a hireling. As the news of Ri-Ri's revenge spread through Paris, an agitated Barthou rushed to his master in the presidential palace. As Poincaré later described the scene to the journalist P.B. Gheusi, Barthou collapsed on Poincaré's desk, terrified by the fatal consequences of the articles. "I'm the one who wrote all the articles against Caillaux!" he exclaimed. "I'm to blame for the tragedy. I must punish myself!" Needless to say, Barthou didn't punish himself. That's seldom the way in politics. He would be a minister several times over and remain the loyal henchman of Poincaré or whoever happened to be his patron at the time. His wife arrested like a common criminal, Finance Minister Caillaux had little choice but to resign. The opposition, decapitated, posed no further threat to Poincaré's plans. Thereafter, Caillaux was a figure of ridicule, even in the streets of Paris. His wife's trial in July was a sensation, as Henriette swooned in her seat like a heroine in a classic tragedy. Her acquittal was anti-climactic. By July 27, 1914, the day she was vindicated, war was a matter of hours away.

Chapter 6

Remote Conspiracies

For the first two weeks in July President Poincaré waited patiently for his allies around the tsar to ready the Russian forces for war. The vast distances and relatively primitive communications of Russia made mobilization a more time-consuming business than in the compact and well- ordered nations of Europe, and the French leader was at first indulgent of the proverbial sluggishness of the Russian bear. By mid-July, however, Poincaré had grown nervous. Anxious to see how the Russians were progressing and determined, in George Thomson's words, to "put a little steel into the spinal column of that powerful but dubious ally," Poincaré embarked at Calais on the cruiser France on July 15 for St. Petersburg. Six days later he and his prime minister, René Viviani, were received with the pomp only an autocrat can muster at the Russian capital. At the tsar's summer residence, the Peterhof, Poincaré acquainted himself with the imperial family, particularly the tsar's four daughters, to each of whom he presented a diamond wristwatch, all the while eyeing them surreptitiously but calculatingly, mindful of the salacious gossip revolving around their relations with the sinister holy man, Rasputin. Poincaré presented the tsar and tsarina with Gobelin tapestries and a set of gold fittings for the tsar's touring car. Soon the French president and the Russian emperor were in deep conversation, if the one-sided oration that the sententious little Poincaré delivered as the tsar sat silent and lackluster could be called a conversation. Tsar Nicholas II was no man to lead an empire. Lethargic and vacillating by nature, under the thumb of his German-born wife, Alexandra, his every movement was protected by hundreds of guards, yet he had no one to guard him against the venal incompetents and flattering toadies who formed his official entourage. Goremykin, president of the council of ministers, was good for nothing more than curling up on the sofa with a third-rate novel, a cigarette dangling between his cracked lips. Maklakov, the minister of the interior, owed his prominence to his ability to amuse the young grand duchesses with his animal imitations: he'd play the panther and bound wildly about on the floor, while the girls cowered and shrieked in mock terror.

The minister of war, V.A. Sukhomlinov, was another dubious character, a compulsive gambler who was always in debt. Shortly before Poincaré's visit he had given an interview, "Russia Is Ready," widely published in the Paris press, which sparked a flurry on the stock exchange which Sukhomlinov was able to turn to his profit. One of his numerous creditors was in close touch with German intelligence.

The real powers behind the papier-mâché facade of the tsarist court were other men. Russia's foreign minister, S.D. Sazonov, had played the most important role in the Balkan intrigues of the previous decade. Alexander Izvolsky, formerly foreign minister and in 1914 ambassador to France, played a diplomatic role scarcely inferior to that of Sazonov. Then there were the grandees of Pan-Slavism, clustered on the general staff and in the high command, foremost among them the tsar's uncle, Grand Duke Nicholas, commander-in-chief of the army. It was Sazonov with whom Poincaré conducted his most important discussions. Sazonov, ably assisted by his predecessor Izvolsky, had been and remained a hard bargainer. Two years before, Poincaré had insisted that France would not be drawn against her will into a war originating in the Balkans. Poincaré had told Sazonov at that time: "Don't count on us for military aid in the Balkans, even if you are attacked by Austria." In August of 1912, Poincaré had reiterated his government's position: "Should the occasion arise, we will fulfill our obligations. Don't rely on us, however, to aid you militarily in the Balkans, even if you are attacked by Austria, or if in attacking her you bring about the intervention of Germany." (Poincaré, Les Responsabilités de la guerre, p. 53) Despite these and numerous other warnings, all of them calculated to insure that the outbreak of war be timed to French convenience, in July, 1914 Poincaré found himself dependent on the tsarist empire. The carefully laid plots of Sazonov and Izvolsky had entangled the French leadership: the road back to Alsace and Lorraine would indeed make a detour through Serbia, at a heavy toll. Poincaré's conduct in St. Petersburg bore witness to his acquiescence in the Balkan entanglement. He busied himself in cheering up Serbia's ambassador to Russia, Spalajkovich, whom he told, "Have no fear. Serbia has a warm friend in our country." Spalajkovich, whose superior in Belgrade, the secretary of foreign affairs, once commented, "I always wonder whether Spalajkovich is more scoundrel than fool, or as stupid as he is crooked," became the first Serbian diplomat to learn of Poincaré's whole-hearted decision to commit France to Serbia and Russia, come what may. The support for Serbia which the French leaders manifested in St. Petersburg was accompanied with a show of hostility toward Austria- Hungary. Prime Minister Viviani, while in the Russian capital, sent a directive to all of France's diplomats stationed abroad, which conveyed this statement made by Poincaré: "France will not tolerate Austrian interference in Serbian affairs." At a diplomatic reception given by Poincaré in the Winter Palace, he made a shocking personal attack on the Austrian ambassador to Russia, Count Szàpàry, in terms that "left Count Szàpàry beside himself," as the Spanish ambassador, the Count of Cartagena, would later write in his Memoirs of a Diplomat. Even Poincaré, stung by the shocked criticism that accompa-

nied his diplomatic faux pas, later felt constrained to offer a limp defense of his outburst in his book L'Union sacrée, where he writes: "I pointed out to the ambassador that Serbia has friends in Russia who would no doubt be astonished to find her the target of harsh measures, and that surprise might be shared in other countries that were friends of Russia." At the very least, Poincaré might have offered his regrets to the Austrian minister on the violent and brutal death of his country's heir to the throne. The remark, coming as it did at a diplomatic reception, testified not only to a lamentable lack of self-control but also to a positive willingness to give offense and provocation.

Besides his conferences with Sazonov and Izvolsky, with whom Poincaré had worked very closely in Paris, both on matters of diplomacy and more sordid business involving the cultivation of France's biggest journalists, Poincaré also met with Grand Duke Nicholas, commander of the Russian army. The grand duke was a giant, six feet seven inches tall, with a bearing as impressive as his height. Although well-known for his brutality, he was immensely popular with the rank and file, for, to the great delight of the muzhiks, he was prone to administer savage thrashings to even the most highly placed of his subordinates, or to deliver a swift kick to the ample behind of an offending general, thereby instituting a democracy of punishment that would be exceeded only by Stalin's mass purges of the officer corps in the 1930's. Nicholas and his brother, Grand Duke Peter, were supported in their Pan-Slavism by their wives Anastasia and Militza, the fiery daughters of the king of little Montenegro, Nicholas. King Nicholas, a perpetual moneygrubber whose searches for a wealthy wife inspired Lehar's Merry Widow, ruled a state linked closely to Serbia historically and ethnically but which, under his rule, inclined toward placating Austria. His daughters, heiresses to a long heritage of banditry and vendetta, were as bold as they were enchanting. They laughed at the toadying of the courtiers around the imperial family, and seemed always to be spoiling for a fight with someone. During the French state visit their preferred enemy was Germany, and the two spitfires quickly wrapped Poincaré around their little fingers. At the banquet which the French ambassador, Maurice Paléologue, was giving the tsar and his president, Alexandra and Militza themselves decorated the tables, setting bouquets of flowers everywhere. Before the sullen Poincaré they placed a gold candy box, which, when opened, proved to contain a half pound of earth from his native Lorraine, the focus of his ambitions for revenge throughout the course of his career. To further stir Poincaré's blood, Grand Duke Nicholas staged a great military review on the parade ground at Krasnoye Selo. Together with the tsar they watched sixty thousand troops swagger by, massive men, barrel-chested and mustachioed, with shouts that evoked wolf packs bounding on the endless steppe. The horses of the cossacks thundered by as if maddened by vodka. Most inspiring of all for the French president, the Russian bands filled the air with French military marches - Le Régiment de Sambre et Meuse, Fiers Enfants de la Lorraine - until Poincaré was transfigured with pride. At the end of the parade Poincaré ventured a prediction about the Russian forces. "They will be in Berlin by All Saint's Day," he forecast. As to Russian troops

in Berlin, the little lawyer from Lorraine was thirty-one years premature. Nor would the tsar or his relatives command them. But Poincaré had allowed himself to be convinced. Russia's five-million-man army would sweep aside the Kaiser's severely outnumbered forces and be watering their horses at the Spree in a few weeks. And by Christmas, Strasbourg and Metz would be French again.

Now that Poincaré and his diplomats were set on war, they would make every arrangement to camouflage the real circumstances of its onset: they would temporize, tell comforting lies, stage full-blown deceptions, even carry out forgeries - all matters in which well-trained diplomats excel when professional duty demands them. Such subterfuges, of course, would be so discreet that very few would even have an inkling of them; if worst came to worst, the perpetrators would deny them in shocked tones. In this spirit, Poincaré, who left St. Petersburg for France on July 23, denied having come to any understanding with the Russians. According to him, "M. Viviani and 1 relaxed and rested." Strictly speaking, he'd learned nothing new: "We have no news, or practically none." As the historian Fabre Luce wrote, "Poincaré acted the role of deaf-mute." The French president took great pains not to direct any potentially incriminating memoranda to the Quai d'Orsay. As the French delegation was preparing to board the France, while final embraces were being exchanged, Sazonov had scribbled the text of a final joint Russian-French declaration, then proferred it to Poincaré. The Frenchman gave a start on reading the draft: "The two governments have established a perfect correspondence of their views and of their aims for the maintenance of the balance of power in Europe, especially on the Balkan peninsula." Poincaré wrote later in L'Union sacrée: "Viviani and I thought the wording, in which there was no mention of peace, would commit us too much to following Russia's policy in the Balkans. Accordingly we modified the draft so as to safeguard our freedom of action." (p. 279) This hypocritical claim, belied by his every action at the time, Poincaré sought to bolster further by the claim that during the all-important days just before the outbreak of the war, "Everyone knew that M. Viviani and I were on the high seas, far from both France and Russia." In politics, hypocrisy is a virtue. Unfortunately for the politicians, history is apt to pursue them, and reveal their self-serving stories and evasions for the lies they were. Poincaré's efforts to cover his tracks were soon exposed. The British ambassador to St. Petersburg, Sir George Buchanan, a staunch opponent of Germany and an intimate friend of France's Paléologue, revealed Poincaré's secret arrangements with the Russians in his memoirs. Buchanan had learned of them from Paléologue shortly after Poincaré had sailed back to France. Immediately after being apprised of the real situation, Buchanan wired London that Poincaré would shield the Serbs, that there was no longer any question of the French leader acting as a check on Russian Pan-Slavists, and that the French and the Russians had "solemnly ratified the commitments of the alliance." On the same report Sir Eyre Crowe, assistant secretary in the Foreign Office, wrote this summary: "The time has passed when we might treat with France to keep Russia within bounds. It is clear that France and Russia have decided to throw down the gauntlet."

After Poincaré's departure Paléologue resumed his role as the most important Frenchman in Russia. During the last ten days of July he would carry out his role as master deceiver in a virtuoso performance. Poincaré's last instructions to Paléologue, issued just before the France weighed anchor, were explicit: "It is imperative that Sazonov remain firm and that we support him." These words have been documented from several sources, most notably the records of secret Russian diplomacy which the Soviets, in the first flush of their revolutionary ardor, were so indelicate as to publish in Pravda in the winter of 1917-1918. Despite his denials, Poincaré in fact maintained contact with both Paris and St. Petersburg on his return voyage. According to Paléologue, he himself had sent important information to his president on board the France, and had received additional instructions from Poincaré, including a telegram impressing upon him the need to "give full support to the imperial government." French historian Fabre Luce, in his outstanding L'Histoire démaquillée, summed up the facts of Poincaré's return trip: The travelers [Poincaré and Viviani] knew that the Russian government did not envisage a Serbian acceptance [of Austria's demands], which in any case depended on Russia, and had decided to mobilize against Austria in the event of an Austro-Serbian break in relations. Hence they knowingly cabled St. Petersburg a renewed promise of support. Poincaré, however, was bent on his role of deaf-mute, and the archives of the Quai d'Orsay would be manipulated so as to make it seem that communications with the outside world were held to an absolute minimum."

Some months after the beginning of the war, the French government would publish a collection of documents purporting to demonstrate its own innocent conduct and Germany's aggressive behavior in the period just before the war's outbreak. In that collection, called the French Yellow Book, there was more than one glaring omission, as would be revealed after the war. Indeed, all the messages which passed between Poincaré and Paléologue as the French president steamed back to France would be either wholly or partially suppressed. Revealingly enough, the entire text of the agreement between Sazonov and Poincaré, in which Poincaré had gratuitously interpolated a deceitful reference to their mutual desire for peace, was missing from the Yellow Book. Fabre Luce remarks:

It is a curious thing that the telegram which, because of that addition, might be taken by naive readers as an indication of the pacific purpose of the travelers, was omitted from the first Yellow Book published by the French government. Was it done to make people forget that Viviani's addition didn't at all square with the policies actually followed during subsequent days? Or to keep up the fiction that the travelers had not been apprised of anything and had taken no action?

Again, the critical telegrams which Poincaré dispatched at Paléologue, ordering him to back the Russians to the limit, are not to be found in the Yellow Book. Later the French president would piously declare, "We know nothing of any remote conspiracies," echoing Paléologue, who made the brazen claim that since the head of state and the head of government were at sea, and since they were

only imperfectly acquainted with the situation, they were unable to send him any instructions.

This sort of manipulation of the truth would be followed by numerous faked documents: texts of messages published with compromising passages omitted, invented passages inserted, and out-and-out forgeries. From the morning of July 24, 1914, not a single official text, either French or Russian, can be accepted at face value by a serious historian, unless it has been subjected to the most thorough-going scrutiny. The student of history, in dealing with the outbreak of the First World War, finds himself inundated by a flood of lies and circumlocutions. Needless to say, at the time millions of naive people were led astray. Millions and tens of millions still believe the official falsehoods, long after they were revealed for what they were. Some of the most glaring deceptions have gone almost unnoticed, due to the vested interests of establishment politicians and court historians, who have made untruth a weapon of state in order to capture the masses, render them mindless, drive them into collective hysteria, and then frustrate any possibility that in calmer days they might learn from their mistakes and come to doubt the word of the power elite. We shall learn how the story of the mobilization of the various national armies has been distorted, and how in particular the leaders of France and Russia faked the date of Austria's and Russia's mobilizations, driving eight million men to their deaths. It would not be until eight years after that fateful July of 1914 that Poincaré, driven to the wall by the League of Human Rights, would be forced to confess that the document which he had flaunted more than any other, the Austrian notice of mobilization, had been faked. His retraction would not restore life to a single one of the dead at Chemin-des-Dames, Verdun, or Tannenberg.

Chapter 7

Russia Mobilises

It is a strange fact that Maurice Paléologue was charged almost exclusively with the conduct of France's relations with Russia. The French prime minister, Viviani, was also foreign minister, constitutionally Paléologue's superior; while Viviani was en route to and from St. Petersburg the minister of justice, Beinvenu-Martin, had been appointed acting foreign minister. The truth is that Viviani had little authority. Poincaré viewed his prime minister with hauteur and suspicion, and often worked behind his back. Paléologue was contemptuous of his superior, of whom he said, "Viviani doesn't have the slightest notion of diplomatic affairs: he is as sluggish as a dormouse and the most foulmouthed of all our politicians." Shunted aside, treated with contempt, Viviani would go mad and end up in an asylum. As for the interim foreign minister, J.B. Bienvenu-Martin, he played an almost non-existent role during his brief tenure. Abel Ferry, state secretary in the foreign ministry, wrote of him in his Carnets (Notebooks): "The minister comes in only forty-five minutes a day, and the mice do play." While Bienvenu-Martin stayed away, and Viviani was outmaneuvered, the foreign ministry swarmed with unofficial "diplomats," operators such as Tardieu, who considered the place his private preserve, wandering through the offices on the Quai d'Orsay with an elegant cigarette-holder protruding from his lugubrious fish-face. The most powerful diplomat on the spot was not Viviani or Bienvenu- Martin, but the political director, Secretary General Philippe Berthelot. He was scarcely a force for an honest diplomacy rooted in mutual trust and conciliation: it was Berthelot who edited the Yellow Book.

No sooner had the France left the dock in St. Petersburg than Paléologue got to work. He invited Sazonov, the Russian foreign minister, to have lunch with him at halt' past twelve the next day, July 24. For the next three days the two men would confer almost without interruption. At the luncheon meeting on the twenty-fourth, Paléologue duly transmitted to Sazonov the secret watchword he had just received telegraphically from Poincaré on the France: "Stand firm! Stand firm!" The French minister was abetted by a second guest at the

diplomatic lunch. Great Britain's ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, rivaled Sazonov in his enthusiasm for the Russian cause. Far from being a dispassionate and neutral emissary of Britain, Buchanan was a strong supporter of Grand Duke Nicholas and his Pan-Slav ambitions. At the lunch, when Sazonov and Paléologue urged him to support France and Russia, he replied unhesitatingly, "You're preaching to the converted." Sazonov, who had just ordered Serbia's Prime Minister Pashich to reject Austria's sixth condition for a settlement of the Sarajevo affair - that a joint commission of inquiry be appointed - saw his hand immeasurably strengthened by this strong intimation of official British support. He stiffened his back yet more, urging Pashich that both he and the Serbian regent should leave Belgrade immediately in preparation for the hostilities. Pashich complied with that demand quickly enough, sending his family to Paris immediately. On the twenty-fifth, Serbia made her counterproposal to Austria, accepting those demands which inconvenienced the Pashich government and its Russian patrons least, but turning down those central to the Austrian position. In accordance with Sazonov's orders, Pashich presented a counterproposal to the Austrian ambassador in which he declared that his government was willing to punish the culprits, but only after they had been proven guilty by an investigation which involved no Austrians. Doubtless this was an understandable position, given that Pashich knew full well who had organized the assassination plot, and that he walked to his offices every morning with the chief conspirator in the Balkans, Russia's minister, Hartwig. As Pashich and his Russian mentors both knew, however, the Serbian rejection of Austria's demands meant war.

On the same day that Paléologue, Sazonov, and Buchanan had intrigued over tea, the Russian leadership, secure in its knowledge of the Serbian response to Austria on the next day, began to mobilize its ponderous armies. Sazonov laid a plan for regional mobilization before the tsar that afternoon, the twenty-fourth, which provided for putting the troops of the Moscow, Kiev, and Kazan military districts on a war footing. Establishment histories speak of Russia's mobilization as having occurred a week later, on the thirtieth or thirty-first. The earlier regional, "preliminary" mobilization is dismissed as merely a defensive measure to forestall a rapacious Austria bent on crushing little Serbia. Generally glossed over is the fact that the Russian fleets of both the Baltic and the Black Sea were ordered to mobilize as well. Clearly this was more than a "regional" mobilization. The Black Sea was far from any of the actors in the Serbian crisis, and no canal linked the Baltic to the Danube. Clearly, the Russians were taking aim at a plum long coveted by the imperialist ideologues of Russian expansion: Tsargrad, Constantinople, Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, a plum long worth more to the tsarists than all the plum trees in Serbia. By mobilizing in the Baltic, just as clearly, the Russian expansionists were preparing to strike against Germany. By mobilizing the Baltic fleet, the Russians were presenting the Kaiser and his ministers with a provocation close to unacceptable.

Tsar Nicholas II was not a perfidious man. He wouldn't have hurt a fly, even if he had possessed the requisite energy. But he was little more lively than a corpse.

A close friend said of the Russian ruler, "If you asked him an important question, he seemed to fall into a cataleptic trance." Thus he was putty in the hands of advisers and ministers like Sazonov. The foreign minister quickly prevailed on him to endorse the plan for partial mobilization, which was then approved by the council of ministers at Krasnoye Selo on the twenty-fifth. The regional, or "partial" mobilization begun by this decision was, in line with the military realities of the day, anything but partial. Once set in motion, mobilization proceeded according to fixed plans which couldn't be altered, and was all but irrevocable. The tsar knew little of strategy and tactics, and was blissfully unaware that he had committed his nation to a course from which there was no turning back when he complied with Sazonov's request. Even then, there were Russian troops who had been feverishly set in motion weeks before the decision to mobilize on July 24, 1914. Twenty days before, the 60,000 troops who had so impressed Poincaré as they strutted to French martial music at Krasnoye Selo had been recalled from Siberia by the general staff. The snows of Siberia had melted during the brief northern summer. It was the boast of the general staff that the Siberian troops would be in Berlin before the snows returned to Russia's vast Asiatic expanse.

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On July 25, Grand Duke Nicholas entertained at a grand military banquet. There the Germans first got wind of Russia's ruler's decision for war. General von Chelius, the Kaiser's personal military representative at the court of the tsar, had been seated beside Nicholas's chief equerry, Baron Grunwald, an old friend. When the toasts were being made, the Russian marshal looked gravely at the German, raised his glass to him with deep emotion, and said, "My dear comrade, I am not authorized to tell you what was decided at noon today, but it was very serious." Then, placing his hand on von Chelius's arm, he added, "Let us hope that we shall see each other again in better days." It was goodbye, then. The Russian officer could scarcely have been more explicit. He knew that a war was on the way, and he was taking leave of his friend, hours before the Serbians would present their rejection to the Austrians. It was Grand Duke Nicholas who was the star of the banquet, however. Before two thousand newly minted officers from the military academy at St. Petersburg (all hastily commissioned hours before), the Russian commander-in-chief put on an exuberant theatrical performance, calculated to rouse the Russian soldiers to a fever pitch of bellicosity. The hall was flooded with joyous song, to the accompaniment of glasses, emptied of vodka, being smashed on the floor in the Russian manner.

Yet another Russian was rejoicing in St. Petersburg that day. Alexander Izvolsky, who had schemed for a war since 1906; who had set another river besides the Seine flowing into Paris, a river of gold; who had bribed and corrupted the press, was on the scene to see his labor finally bear fruit. He had returned to his capital to keep watch lest Poincaré slow things down through any adherence to diplomatic or legal formalities. He needn't have worried; Sazonov and Grand Duke Nicholas did their work well. Now it only remained for Izvolsky to return

to Paris, to observe the final French preparations and to stand ready to push the French leaders over the brink if they showed last-minute signs of hesitation. On the evening of the twenty-fifth, Izvolsky boarded the train for Paris. His French colleague, Paléologue, tossing discretion to the winds, accompanied him to the station and to his personal railway car. Izvolsky, square-faced, with the features of a Kalmuck, beamed. With a triumphant cry, he assured the Frenchman, "This time it's war!" Then both men kissed each other in the Russian fashion, on the mouth. Shortly afterward, the Russian ambassador's train set off for Paris.

The next morning Paléologue telegraphed Paris to inform his government that the Russian mobilization was under way. Neither on that day - the twenty-sixth - nor on any succeeding day did the French leaders remonstrate with the Russians or seek to inhibit their actions in any way, thereby supplying further evidence of the Poincaré government's collusion with the Russian imperialists. Needless to say, the Yellow Book's editor chose to omit this telegram from its allegedly comprehensive documentation of the origins of the war. For some years Poincaré believed that by eliminating the incriminating evidence from the government's official account of the events of July, 1914, he could wash himself clean of any suspicions and accusations. His pedestrian mentality failed to anticipate that the cataclysm he was calling forth by his secret machinations might bring about fundamental changes in the political order in which he had learned to serve himself so well. Ten years after the war, Sergei Dimitrievich Sazonov, the Russian foreign minister with whom Poincaré had so cleverly arranged the war, found himself in exile from his native Russia, which lay in ruins, chastized by a more fearsome knout than any of the tsars could ever have hoped to wield. The collapse of the old order had left him with little appetite to cover up Poincaré's doings, and in his Sechs Schwere Jahre (published in English as Fateful Years) he revealed the truth about Paléologue's telegram to Paris, and another historical lie crumbled into rubble.

Izvolsky arrived in Paris on the twenth-ninth. The telegram had preceded him, of course, and Poincaré was well prepared to cooperate with the Russian ambassador when the envoy presented himself at the Elysée Palace. The French president was secretly delighted by the unscrupulous measures the Russians had been taking to force the issue with Germany and Austria. Poincaré craved war even more ardently than the Russians. After two years of striving, he was about to get his wish.

Chapter 8

German Restraint

The Russian leaders had in the beginning believed, with no small naiveté, that their mobilization could be carried out in secret, affording their lumbering armed forces a week or so extra in which to assemble the millions of draftees and march them to the German and Austrian frontiers. Within twenty-four hours the word was out, scattered to the four winds. The indiscretions had been numerous, from Grunwald's hint to the German von Chelius at the banquet at Krasnoye Selo to Izvolsky's indiscreet behavior at the railway station. The newly commissioned young officers from the military academy were less than reticent, and Grand Duke Nicholas, his chest puffed out, was already playing the braggart soldier to the admiring ladies of the Russian capital. As the Bolsheviks were to demonstrate by their publication of the Russian diplomatic archives concerning Franco-Russian relations between 1910 and 1914, the tsarist regime continued to mistrust its French allies down to the very outbreak of the war. The offer of so much French gold and blood in addition to the tsar's gaining mastery of Constantinople, the Balkans, Ruthenia, those parts of Poland in German and Austrian hands, and Bohemia as well, struck the Russians as generous indeed, even if compensated for by the rerun to France of Alsace-Lorraine. To make sure that France would not at the last moment withdraw from her commitments, the Russians speeded up mobilization to the best of their abilities. The faster they moved, the more certain France's cooperation, but all the more likely that word would reach the Pan-Slavists' prospective enemies. And already suspicion was rising across the border, in Germany.

On July 25, Kaiser Wilhelm was still at sea aboard his yacht Hohenzollern, unaware of the Russian decision to mobilize and the Serbian rejection of Austria's demands. In Berlin, the German government was beginning to receive disquieting news from St. Petersburg. Before that, Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg had been slow to credit the Russian involvement in the grisly affair at Sarajevo. Although aware of Russian machinations in the Balkans, it seemed to him inconceivable that the tsar would make common cause with regicides. It

was his predecessor, Prince Bernhard von Bülow, who opened his eyes on this matter. With malicious delight, von Bülow recounted the story of how in 1814 Tsar Alexander I had urged Louis XVIII to find a job for Savary. The king had said that that was quite impossible, since Savary had sat on the revolutionary tribunal which had sentenced Louis XVI to the guillotine. "Is that all?" exclaimed the tsar, "and I dine every day with Bennigsen and Uchakov who strangled my father!" At the beginning of July 1914, Bethmann-Hollweg had been present at a conversation between the Kaiser and his minister of war, General Falkenhayn. The general had asked, "Is it necessary to begin any sort of military preparations?" As we have seen, the Kaiser answered in the negative; "I am completely opposed to that," adding, "Have a nice summer," after which he sent his minister off to the country. As Prince von Bülow was later to relate, on the next day, "just as he [the Kaiser] was about to leave for Kiel and his cruise to the north, he received representatives of the army and navy general staffs and informed them that Austria was going to demand an accounting from Serbia for the Sarajevo murder, but that there was no reason to fear a serious conflict, and it was hence unnecessary to begin military or naval preparations." To be sure, blustering as was his habit, Wilhelm II had fired off a broadside of bad names at the Serbs and expressed the wish that Serbia be soundly thrashed for its crime. Nevertheless, he had made clear that punishment was entirely the business of the Austrians. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg was a good deal less warlike than even his sovereign. Even after he received word that Poincaré was heading for Russia, and was informed of the French press's far from hostile coverage of the Sarajevo assassins, he did nothing. Sitting alone sphinx-like in his Berlin office, he kept silent, reading his Plato, secure in his belief that the war, if it broke out, would be confined to the Balkans.

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Nevertheless, some German officials became apprehensive early in July. Count Wedel, a counselor to the political section of the foreign affairs ministry, telephoned Berlin from Norderney in the East Frisian Islands, where he was vacationing, to ask if he should return to his post. He was told that his vacation need not be interrupted; it was only a false alarm, and everything would be all right. State Secretary Delbrück, also on vacation, grew apprehensive ten days after Sarajevo. On July 9 he returned to Berlin, and suggested to Bethmann Hollweg that it might be wise to set in motion the contingency measures that had been formulated several years before in the event of a threat of war. The measures include big purchases of grain on the Rotterdam exchange, and Delbrück urged this with particular insistence. Indeed, the French had begun stockpiling flour as early as January 1914, with special funds provided by the military. Bethmann-Hollweg remained calm in the face of Delbrück's entreaties. "For Germany to perform the slightest action which could be taken as a preparation for war would be out of the question," he replied. Still worried, Delbrück had taken his case to the foreign minister, Gottlieb von Jagow, and then the treasury secretary, Kuhn. He was rebuffed each time, and finally ordered to resume his vacation. He wouldn't return until almost two weeks later.

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It was Montaigne who wrote, "All the troubles in this world arise from stupidity," yet Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg was not a stupid man. Fluent in the classical languages, a lover of Beethoven, he was a very capable administrator, with a genius for paperwork. In the tangled thicket of intrigue which surrounded the Sarajevo affair, however, he was completely lacking in astuteness. Indulgent toward Austria-Hungary, he imagined that her leaders would restrain their indignation and, if they couldn't work out a settlement with Serbia, at least confine themselves to a war limited in area and aim. Doubtless he should have made very clear to the Austrian government that Germany, sympathetic as she was to Austria's outrage, would not allow herself to be dragged into a war over Sarajevo. Bethmann-Hollweg should have communicated the fact that the Kaiser's sympathy was that of a friend and of a monarch, not that of a warlord or a geopolitician seeking to alter fundamentally the borders and power relationships in any part of Europe, including the Balkans. Yet the German chancellor let things slide during the vital first three weeks in July, The Austrians prepared their ultimatum, and the Germans, niether distancing themselves from it nor supporting it, likewise neither prepared for war nor for peace.

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The revelation provided von Chelius by Baron Grunwald on July 25 struck the chancellor's office like a bomb. More bad news poured in. German sentries on the East Prussian border reported the Russians tearing down their customs buildings and uprooting barrier fences. From St. Petersburg came further word of military preparations under way in Kiev and Kharkov. Grand Duke Nicholas had paraded his cavalry from Krasnoye Selo through St. Petersburg. The sixteen squadrons of Guards, Cossacks, cuirassiers, and dragoons in full battle array made a fearsome sight, and the thousands of trotting hooves, the bugle fanfares, and the glittering regimental colors stirred the hearts of the St. Petersburgers and the fears of the foreigners, at least those who were diplomats from countries less than enthusiastic about Russian imperialism. Germany's ambassador, Count Pourtalès, paid a call on Sazonov. "You are continuing to arm?" inquired the German diplomat. "Just some preparatory measures... in order not to be caught short. It's not a question of mobilization," responded Sazonov. "Such measures are extremely dangerous. I fear they may provoke countermeasures from the other side," retorted the German. In a few hours, news of this conversation was contributing to the growing furor in Berlin. Bethmann-Hollweg was panic-stricken when he realized that the enormous Russian empire was readying for war. Galvanized to action at last, on July 26 he sent a telegram to his ambassador in London, Prince Lichnowsky, instructing him to call on Britain's foreign minister, Sir Edward Grey, and ask him to intervene immediately with St. Petersburg against a Russian mobilization in any form. Bad show: Sir Edward had gone fishing that Sunday. It was the season when the trout were at

their fattest and most beautiful. Grey had once written, "For myself I know nothing which equals the excitement of having hooked an unexpectedly large fish on a small rod and a fine tackle." Prince Lichnowsky caught nothing that day. He was forced to wait until Monday to convey his chancellor's message. At the same time, another fisherman was spending the last few hours of his yachting vacation at sea. Kaiser Wilhelm was worried and angry. He considered the actions (or lack of action) of his chancellor deplorable. He had finally been notified of the developing crisis, but he still awaited the text of Serbia's reply to Austria. Vienna had tarried a day after receiving the note before informing Berlin of its content. Von Jagow, the German minister of foreign affairs, would only see the text on July 27, two days after it was delivered to Vienna. Wilhelm II landed at Kiel on the twenty seventh, and arrived in Potsdam on his special train several hours later. There he met the hapless Bethmann- Hollweg and favored him with a withering glare. The chancellor, stammering in confusion, offered his resignation on the spot. The Kaiser coldly refused it. "You have cooked this broth. Now you are going to eat it," he told Bethmann-Hollweg.

The next morning Kaiser Wilhelm had his first look at the text of the Serbian reply, at seven o'clock in the morning. He was not overly dismayed: he believed that the assassins had to be found and punished, but it still didn't seem as if war were inevitable. He learned that the British were considering proposing that the Austrians occupy Belgrade until the crisis was resolved. Far-fetched as that may have seemed, it still offered hope that a solution short of all-out combat might be found. There seemed an additional ray of hope from Vienna. Kaiser Franz Josef had let fall a remark which seemed to hold open a possibility for peace. "After all," the Habsurg had said, "breaking off diplomatic relations doesn't have to be a casus Belli." Kaiser Wilhelm took just an hour to work out a plan for a provisional peace between Austria and Serbia, along the lines of the thinking in the British foreign office. After a horseback ride in the park, he returned to his desk to write down his proposal in more definite form. It called for a temporary occupation of Belgrade by the Austrians, to insure the good faith of the Serbs in rooting out the conspiracy that had murdered Wilhelm's friend the Archduke.

Chapter 9

The Word of a King

Meanwhile, in Britain, opinion was mixed as to what to do about the gathering storm over the Continent. The animosity toward Germany which had been provoked by the rising German economic challenge had not decreased, nor had concern over the growth of the German navy and merchant fleet. Nevertheless, an important sector of public opinion and the press opposed British entry into war, especially if Russia might profit by it and be emboldened to strive for hegemony in Europe. The Manchester Guardian prepared a powerful editorial against the war, in which it stated: "We should first of all have it definitely understood that if Russia and France make war, we will not follow them." The Times saw the danger on another front. In a clear-sighted prophecy that is now more valid than ever, it admonished: "A general European war would guarantee that the economic future would belong to the American continent, particularly to North America." The threat of the supremacy of a massive and primitive tsarist Russia, which Britain had felt compelled to oppose on the battlefields of the Crimea sixty years before and which it had warily confronted along the boundaries of its Indian raj for several decades, occupied Britons more than the distant threat from their American cousins, however. Writing in the Times, Norman Angell predicted that: The object and effect of our entering this war would be to ensure the victory of Russia and her Slavonic allies. Will a dominant Slavonic federation of, say, 200,000,000 autocratically governed people with a very rudimentary civilization but heavily equipped for military aggression be a less dangerous factor in Europe than a dominant Germany of 65,000,000? ... The last war we fought on the Continent was for the purpose of preventing the growth of Russia. We are now asked to fight for the purpose of promoting it. With public opinion far from enthusiastic about a possible alliance with Russia, the United Kingdom's politicians had to tread lightly, even though the idea of cutting Germany down to size had great appeal for them.

Despite Britain's long-standing ambition to control the Continent, one can't very well claim that the British ruling class was cut out to rule Europe by rea-

son of its exceptional superiority. The illustrious William Pitt, no matter his accomplishments, and disregarding his sorry end (he died at forty-seven from his penchant for tippling port wine), can scarcely be compared to NapoLéon. In fact, more than one British statesman has been noteworthy for his lack of intellectual accomplishment, from the stodgy Edward Grey, foreign secretary in 1914, to the much ballyhooed Winston Churchill, an academic failure. At Balliol College, Oxford, Grey was sent down by the Master, Benjamin Jowett, who wrote in the minute book, "Sir Edward Grey, having been repeatedly admonished for idleness and having shown himself entirely ignorant of the work set him in vacation as a condition of his residence, was sent down, but allowed to come up to pass his examination in June." His academic redemption notwithstanding, Grey never achieved a proper understanding of the nations of the Continent. Like his people, he knew Europe only as a tourist, passing through in his sleeping car enroute to India. He had set foot in Paris just once, a member of King George V's retinue during a state visit. He thought "foreigners" strange beings, "terrible schemers," and once expressed the opinion that "foreign statesmen ought to receive their education in one of England's public schools." According to Sir Edward's lights, had Wilhelm II, Poincaré, Nicholas II, Franz Josef, and even the redoubtable Pashich been cast in the Etonian mold, Europe would have acquired a sure harmony, particularly if each of the Old Boys had rendered homage to His Britannic Majesty. As an English observer wrote, "Sir Edward had the inborn conviction of the nineteenth century Englishman that England's role in Europe was that of a president who convoked conferences and cast the deciding vote." This impeccable Englishman, with his umbrella and top hat, who fished enthusiastically and catalogued the birds he watched in his garden, was charming and agreeable in his private life. But as a custodian of the Empire, he was a different man, watchful and jealous of whoever might attempt to raise himself to the dizzying heights reserved for Britain alone. For him, in the end, British supremacy was all that counted. The Irish, the Boers, the Highland Scots, all of them and millions of others had challenged it at their peril. Now, although Grey could never have recognized it, this unique combination - breadth of power and narrowness of outlook - for the first time became a trap not only for Britain's rivals on the Continent but for Britain and its empire as well.

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While Grey was off fishing on Sunday, the twenty-sixth, his interim secretary of state, Sir Arthur Nicolson, had invited the ambassadors of Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia to a conference in which they could begin preliminary conversations to defuse the Serbian crisis. By an amusing coincidence, all three ambassadors were related, all of them cousins: Mensdorff, the Austrian; Benckendorff, who despite his German name was Russian; and Lichnowsky, a German with a Slavic name (his father had had to flee Austria after a duel in which he killed a Hungarian nobleman). Lichnowsky was an odd ambassador. He and his wife detested the Kaiser, a fact which his wife had once confessed to Mrs. Asquith, the wife of Britain's prime minister. Like his cousins he was

worldly and vain, and in fact had been commissioned by the Kaiser to keep the British entertained and diverted while the Reich built up its fleet. The three ambassadors were unable even to meet, for their governments shared a mistrust of what the three cousins might intrigue while meeting in distant London. Nevertheless, the fact that the British government had attempted to arrange such a conference, to the exclusion of France, fostered a brief hope that all was not yet lost. In Austria, the most aggrieved of the great powers, there was still sentiment for a settlement. The breaking off of relations with Serbia had caused more fright than enthusiasm. Count Berchtold, the foreign minister, was shattered by the development. A contemporary wrote of him: "Berchtold was perhaps the most frightened man in Europe that afternoon. He had thought to terrify the Serbians. The latter, sure that the Russian colossus, their secret ally, would support them to the hilt in case of trouble, had not given in. It was then that Berchtold became terror-stricken."

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Meanwhile, a meeting between his brother, Prince Heinrich, and his cousin, George V, at Buckingham Palace had given Kaiser Wilhelm another straw to grasp at. The two royal cousins had passed an hour that Sunday morning, during which George had advised the prince to rejoin his brother in Berlin without delay. When Heinrich asked the king what Britain planned to do, George replied, according to the report Prince Heinrich made to the Kaiser, "We shall try all we can to keep our of this and shall remain neutral." According to notes he made of the talk, George V had a different version of his answer: I don't know what we shall do. We have no quarrel with anyone and I hope we shall remain neutral. But if Germany declares war on Russia and France joins Russia, then I am afraid we shall be dragged into it. But you can be sure that I and my government will do all that we can to prevent a European war.

Whether the two cousins misunderstood each other or King George retreated from his word under pressure is difficult to determine. When the Kaiser heard his brother's version, however, he was transported, in George Malcolm Thomson's words, "by sentimental and monarchical enthusiasm. Here was something infinitely more significant and precious than the huckstering of the politicians. The Lord's anointed was speaking to his peer over the confusion and the turmoil. 'I have the word of a king!' cried Wilhelm. 'That is sufficient for me.' " Unfortunately for Europe, even if Heinrich had understood correctly, kings and their word no longer had much weight. Precisely the kind of politician Wilhelm despised, a man slippery and ambitious beyond measure, was about to make his debut on the stage of international affairs.

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As Grey was returning from his angling expedition, Britain's First Lord of the Admiralty was swinging into action. He was a born swashbuckler, something of a fantast, who ever since his adolescence had been on the lookout for strife and mischief around the world, from Cuba to the Transvaal, from the Sudan to the Afghan border. The smell of gunpowder worked on him as an aphrodisiac

might affect another man. He was already quite a drinker and had something of a stammer. His name was Winston Churchill. That Sunday morning he had accompanied his family to the beach at Cromer. The news sent him hurrying back to his desk at the Admiralty. Even before he left the beach he telephoned Prince Louis of Battenberg, the First Sea Lord, and asked him to order the British fleet in the Channel not to disperse. In his office, brandishing a cigar, he drafted a communique announcing to the world England's first tangible intervention in the military preparations leading up to the war. No German ships were in sight, nor did the Germans have any plan to send their fleet into the Channel. By this provocative gesture Britain had cleverly aligned itself with France. As one of Churchill's supporters exclaimed, "Churchill's orders to the fleet will surely be understood in Berlin." Some men continued desperately to search for ways to stave off war. Ambassador Lichnowsky telegraphed Berlin the desire of the British government that Germany put a brake to the Austrians. Wilhelm was receptive to the British request. He had become convinced that Austria had carried its demands too far, and in any case the revelation of an unbreakable Russian-Serbian alliance made compromise imperative. He noted in his journal: "Our loyalty to Austria is leading us to political and economic destruction."

Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, however, could not break his habit of temporizing. After receiving the British offer, which was rather conciliatory to the Austrians since it proposed that Austrian forces be allowed to occupy the Serbian capital temporarily, he communicated it to the Austrian foreign ministry only after some delay with great reluctance. In this matter, perhaps Sir Edward Grey might be reproached as well, in view of his reluctance to deal with the Austrian foreign minister, Count Berchtold, directly. Certainly the snail's pace at which Grey and Bethmann- Hollweg set about trying to contact the Austrians for peace stands in sad contrast to the speed which Churchill began mobilizing the Royal Navy for war. Instead of the matter of minutes that it would have been for the transmittal of Grey's vital proposal directly to Vienna, the British proposal arrived there some fifty hours after Serbia's rejection of Austria's demands. Bethmann-Hollweg managed also to sabotage a last message from the Kaiser to the Austrians, delaying its dispatch for nine hours on July 28 in order to insert changes that enlarged the area to be occupied by the Austrians to include neighboring territory mentioned nowhere in the British proposal of two days before. By the time the telegram arrived, night had fallen in the Austrian capital. Kaiser Wilhelm's proposal would have to wait until the next day to be read. Then it was too late, for Berchtold had already decided for war. On the morning of July 28, Berchtold composed and sent this note to the Serbian government: "The royal government of Serbia not having replied in a satisfactory manner to the note delivered it on July 23, 1914 by the Austro-Hungarian minister at Belgrade, the imperial and royal government finds itself under the necessity of safeguarding its own rights and interests, and of resorting for that purpose to force of arms. Austria-Hungary thus considers itself from this moment in a state of war with Serbia." The effect of Austria's declaration of war in

London was disastrous for Germany. The Lord Chancellor, Lord Haldane, saw the hand of the Prussian militarists, soon to be a world-wide bogey, in Berchtold's act. "The German General Staff is in the saddle," he announced. Sir Edward Grey, deeply angered, offered the opinion that "something diabolical is brewing in Berlin," as much a self-deception as it was a deception of the British people. In Berlin Bethmann-Hollweg was harshly reprimanded by Kaiser Wilhelm. He was deeply shaken by Austria's declaration of war, which he had in no way desired, despite his attempt to toughen their position against the Serbs. On a diplomatic dispatch which had been sent from London, he wrote: "Austria's duplicity is intolerable. They refuse to give us any information."

At three o'clock on the morning of the twenty-ninth, after some hours pacing the floor in his office on the Wilhelmstrasse, he drafted a telegram to his ambassador in Vienna. He ordered him, very succinctly, "to speak with Count Berchtold immediately and very emphatically." A serious war was still not inevitable. Sir Edward Grey ordered his ambassador to call on Sazonov in St. Petersburg and counsel moderation (a far quicker and more direct approach than he had taken with the government of Austria-Hungary.) Austria, for its part, was still floating trial balloons. It would take fifteen days for the Austrians to mobilize. Only then could they invade Serbia. Better than anyone, Wilhelm II knew there was time to negotiate a peace. He attempted to appeal directly to his cousin Tsar Nicholas II in St. Petersburg, at the very time when Britain's ambassador was telling Sazonov, "1 have come to implore you not to consent to any military measure that Germany could interpret as a provocation." Sazonov was not to be so easily moved, however. He had been conferring with France's Ambassador Paléologue for the previous four days. Paléologue told him, "War may break out at any minute. That eventuality should govern all our diplomatic actions." Sazonov was only too happy to reassure the Frenchman. "Our general staff is becoming impatient," he repeated, again and again.

Chapter 10

Damning Documents

The discussion which Poincaré had conducted in St. Petersburg with the Russian ministers and generals had been a good deal more than exhortations and flowery encomiums. They had been extensive, detailed, and specific. The Russians sought sanction for their desire to stream south to Constantinople, a move to coincide with their crossing the Caucasus into Armenia. After that, they coveted Jerusalem as well as the Suez Canal. The French would agree to these aims, but not until 1917, a week before the tsarist government fell. In July 1914, the French leadership had other ideas for the employment of the Russian army. Although Poincaré did not oppose the Russians' dreams of expansion to the south outright, he insisted that the Russians launch a major attack against the Germans in East Prussia, to pin down the bulk of the German army far from French territory. Sazonov and Grand Duke Nicholas entertained just the opposite notion. To them France's mission was to wear down the Germans on the Western Front, so that Russia might have a free hand in the south and east. Each side attempted to conceal the selfishness of its own designs, and tried to lure the other through affecting shows of magnanimity into bending to its will. Neither was deceived. At the same time, the Russians were busy advising their Serbian protéges on what to do when the war broke out. On July 24 Sazonov conveyed several suggestions to the Serbian ambassador, which were immediately telegraphed to Belgrade. One recommendation was that the Serbians evacuate their capital at once. Twenty years later, Pashich's son-in-law Stefanovich published a photocopy of the telegram:

> Council Presidency, Belgrade, attention Pashich. Extremely urgent. Secret. Outcome council of ministers held today, 3 hours, chaired by tsar, Krasnoye Selo. Stop. Sazonov charges me inform you general mobilization ordered as agreed in military districts Odessa Kiev Kazan Moscow with mobilization Baltic and Black Sea fleets. Stop. Order sent other districts step up preparation general mobilization. Stop. Sazonov confirms Siberian divisions concentrated

> behind Moscow Kazan. Stop. All military school students promoted officers all officers on leave recalled. Stop. Sazonov asks we draft reply ultimatum in very conciliatory terms but categorically reject all points especially sixth [the one that demanded a joint commission of inquiry] damaging our prestige. Stop. Tsar desires immediate mobilization but if Austria begins hostilities we must draw back without resisting in order to preserve military forces intact and await developments. Stop. Sazonov will have conference with Paléologue and Buchanan in order to settle basis common action and means furnishing us armaments. Stop. Russia and France maintain attitude Serbian-Austrian conflict not local conflict but part large European questions that only all powers can resolve. Stop. Competent circles here express great annoyance with Austria. Stop. Watchword is war. Stop. Entire Russian nation eager for war great ovations in front of legation. Stop. Tsar will reply personally telegram prince regent. Stop. Spalajkovich. (Telegram order number: 196/8; date: July 24, 1914; references: Serbian diplomatic archives, Council Presidency, signatures Pacu/Pashich; cabinet 19, file 11/B, folio 7 "Petersburg", July 2-15 to July 18-31, 1914).

This telegram has been verified by two different sources. A copy was also sent to Paris, as well as to the Serbian legation in London. There the second secretary of the legation, Petrovich, whose duties included decoding messages, made a clandestine copy of it. Petrovich was hounded by agents of the Serbian secret service until he committed suicide, but not before he had handed over the documents to a second party for safekeeping. Twenty years later, the Petrovich copy was reproduced in facsimile in London (*Black Hand over Europe*). Since the Serbian archives were never published in a form like the French Yellow Book (and the various other collections issued by the belligerents during the war and after), either by Serbia or its successor, the Yugoslavian government, authentication of the Serbian documents published by Stefanovich, Petrovich et al, has been difficult. The fact that a good-sized collection, scrupulously indexed, was published by a leading functionary of the Serbian ministry of foreign affairs, however, makes it impossible to simply ignore the documents, as some writers have attempted to do. During the 1930's in France, works which dealt with the Serbian documents were promptly removed from circulation, a condition which holds true today. Henri Pozzi's Les Coupables (The Guilty Ones), for example, published in 1938, became a best-seller and then disappeared seemingly without trace. There isn't even a copy available in the National Library in Paris, nor in the Library of Political Science, where the critical study of potentially invaluable foreign policy documents is surely a priority. If the documents are not genuine, let them be exposed. Interestingly enough, however, when they began to appear in France, the press fell silent. Only the Parisian weekly, Je suis partout, and the very important political daily, L'Action francaise, devoted any attention to them. André Tardieu, the press czar and Balkan intriguer who was deeply implicated by the Serbian documents, maintained an uncharacteristic silence on their

publication. The great French historian and former minister, Benoist-Méchin, believed them genuine. Fifty years after they appeared, the Serbian documents are more important than ever in unraveling the web of conspiracy and collusion which unleashed the First World War. Further transcriptions from the Serbian telegrams: Telegram 194/8, sent on July 22, 1914, while Poincaré was still in St. Petersburg, by the Serbian minister to the tsar:

> President of the council, Belgrade (attention Pashich). Extremely urgent, secret. Sazonov asks we intensify maximum military preparations, but avoid any public demonstrations before preparations completed. Stop. Sazonov negotiations with Poincaré-Viviani very difficult. Stop. Both opposed any measure or agreement capable dragging France into war for French concerns or interests not involved. Stop. Attitude President Republic toward Szàpàry causes immense sensation official and diplomatic circles. Stop. Sazonov insists France must now know military arrangements in process under any pretext. Stop. Transfer Siberian troops Europe ended. Stop. Mobilization large military districts will be ordered immediately departure Poincaré-Viviani. (Reference: Serbian diplomatic archives; Council Presidency. Sub/signatures Pacu/Pashich, cabinet 19, file 11/B, folio 7: "Petersburg," July 2-15 to July 18-31, 1914.)

Another telegram from Ambassador Spalajkovich to Pashich, Telegram No. 197/8, shows how Sazonov made a point of telling the over-inquisitive Paléologue a provisional lie as long as Poincaré had not yet crossed the Baltic. It read:

> President of the council, Belgrade (attention Pashich) - extremely urgent - secret. Paléologue this evening asks Sazonov whether rumors mobilization military district Odessa Kazan Kiev Odessa and two fleets conform truth. Stop. Expressed sharp displeasure if action liable to provoke grave complications ordered unbeknownst France. Stop. Sazonov issued formal denial. Stop. Confirms necessity you avoid slightest indiscretion. Stop. Sazonov will inform Paléologue immediately Poincaré-Viviani depart Scandinavia. Stop. Notify Vesnich Gruich - Spalajkovich. (Reference: Serbian diplomatic archives, Council Presidency, sub Pacu/Pasic, cabinet 19, file 11/B, folio 7 "Petersburg," July 2-15 to July 18-31, 1914.)

A third secret telegram, dated July 25, 1914, this time to the Serbian ambassador at Paris, Milenko Vesnich, was sent from Belgrade by the Serbian government to avoid, by request of St. Petersburg, any indiscretion concerning military preparations in progress. It read:

> Belgrade, July 21-25. Serbian legation, Paris (attention Vesnich). Extremely urgent-secret. Pending new instructions withhold all in-

> formation re: measures taken her or Petersburg. Stop. Affirm situation serius but by no means desperate despite violent ultimatum. Stop. Insist on our profound desire conciliation and confidence in results intervention great friendly powers. Stop. Absolutely necessary public opinion French parliament be unaware all military preparations here and Petersburg. Stop. In conformance with the tsar's desire we are accelerating mobilization have started transfer Nish archives, treasury, official services. Stop. Evacuation Kragujevach arsenal concluded. Stop. Inform Tardieu/Berthelot agreement Sazonov reply ultimatum conciliatory form negative substance. Stop. War certain. Stop. Urgent facilitate voyage London where security Madame Pashich and Pacu family. [This telegram, registered at Belgrade as the point of origin, under No. 432/VP/14, arrived at Paris "a little before noon" and was registered under No. 291/3, BP 31.] (References: Serbian diplomatic archives, Council Presidency, sub Pacu/Pashich, cabinet 17, file 8/PV, "Paris" folio 9, July 2-15 to July 18-31, 1914)

One of Pashich's colleagues, who was on a mission to France, wrote an astonishing note demonstrating the degree to which the Serbian government withheld information from the French government while at the same time confiding vital secrets to certain private citizens in Paris: Telegram 432/VP/14, received by Vesnich, the Serbian ambassador, a little before noon on July 25, 1914, was communicated by him in the afternoon to André Tardieu and to the administrator of the Balkans Agency, Edgar Roels. When Vesnich, coming from the Quai d'Orsay, entered Roels's agency [then located on the Rue Tai bout], he looked like a sleepwalker. His emotion was so great he appeared to be choking. "It's war!" Bochko Cristich said to me a few moments later, "and sure victory for our two countries. Roels and Tardieu told it to the minister." Bochko Cristich was a Serbian diplomat, an attaché in Paris, who would later become Yugoslavia's minister at Athens. Besides the Serbian documents published by Stefanovich and others, there have been other disclosures from the Serbian side which have cast light on the activities of Pashich and his government. Noteworthy among them have been the sensational revelations of Ljuba Jovanovich, the former Serbian minister to Vienna. Jovanovich, as a diplomat, had access to the secret archives in Belgrade. Some years after the war he revealed that Spalajkovich had sent a supplementary telegram from St. Petersburg on July 24, 1914, which included the words, "A drastic decision is expected at any moment." Later the German historian Webersberger would publish a copy of a scrap of paper written in Pashich's hand "noting the registration of the guns of the Sarajevo conspirators and indicating the man responsible for their conveyance: Tankosich." As was mentioned earlier, Voya Tankosich was a personal agent of Nicola Pashich. While the documents issued by the Soviet government after the Revolution include a great many items damaging to the tsarist claims of innocence in the matter of plotting for war, there are a good many gaps in the record, particularly pertaining to Serbia. While Russian designs on

Istanbul and thé Straits, the close relations and mutual deceptions of Izvolsky and Poincaré, and the systematic bribery of the French press are detailed by a wealth of documents, one will search in vain for material on the intrigues of Hartwig in Belgrade, culminating in the double assassination at Sarajevo. Those documents are missing. There is a simple explanation. Between the revolution which resulted in the Kerensky government in March 1917 and the Bolshevik takeover in October of that year, a Major Verkovsky had been named minister of war. This same Verkovsky had been Colonel Artmanov's righthand man in Belgrade, helping out with, among other things, the plot which culminated at Sarajevo. With several months of access to the Russian archives, he was able to eliminate anything detrimental to himself.

* * *

Serbia and Russia had a rival when it came to doctoring and suppressing official documents, of course. That was France, where great efforts were expended to bring the diplomatic sources into some kind of congruence with the official propaganda. From the first telegram of Ambassador Paléologue on the July 25, 1914, the official texts have been calmly and completely changed upon arrival. Historian Fabre Luce writes: The brief text in which Paléologue reported the Russian mobilization was replaced with a fictitious text, accounting for that decision as the result of the Austrian general mobilization and German military preparations. The addition underlines the fact that these justifications could not have been given in the ambassador's telegram. And for a good reason: at the time Paléologue sent his telegram, the Austrian general mobilization had not yet been ordered. (*L'Histoire démaquillée*, pp. 90f.) Luce continues: All that it took to reverse the order of the mobilizations was one turn of the clock: then, without changing the hour, a morning telegram had been turned into an evening telegram. This falsification was done at the outset: the archives commission established that the register of the telegraph service bore an incorrect time notation. The French historian further adds: The drafts of the telegrams sent during that period frequently have corrections, excisions or additions, written between the lines, usually in pencil and for the most part in the same handwriting as the original. An examination of the documents by the commission of archives indicated that these corrections had almost always been made after the event. Certain telegrams underwent curious delays, either when sent or after arrival. The one that officially informed Paris of Russia's general mobilization took nearly ten hours to arrive at its destination. It was inserted between two other less important telegrams which took, respectively, two and four hours. So many precautions taken to dupe the researcher at last call his attention to the very thing it was intended to hide from him. Europe in 1914 was a minefield of diplomatic booby traps of the French and the Serbs through which extreme care was needed to pick one's way. Of the two, the Serbians were the cruder, content simply to eliminate any document which might cause them trouble.

Chapter 11

A Tsar Gives In

It was not until July 26, 1914, that the tread of marching troops in St. Petersburg echoed in Berlin, when imprecise rumors as to the tsar's decision to mobilize a million soldiers began to reach the German capital. Bethmann-Hollweg immediately informed the British government of his concern. In Vienna, two days later, the situation had deteriorated still further thanks to the delay in the arrival of the conciliatory messages of Wilhelm II and Sir Edward Grey. The Dual Monarchy was rattling its sword with a declaration of war that sober heads recognized was largely rhetorical: it was still likely that all that would come from it would be the dispatch of a few old tubs down the Danube to lob a few shells at Belgrade, already abandoned by the Serbian government at the order of their tsarist masters. If the Austrian government really meant business, the two weeks it would take to mobilize the Austrian army would allow ample time for negotiations. The Russian Pan-Slavists, of course, had no intention of seeing their carefully laid plans for a Balkan conflagration thwarted. The idea that a last-moment intervention by wiser heads might upset their plans filled them with fear and rage. On July 28th Sazonov called on Tsar Nicholas and obtained two ukases which he promptly forwarded to General Yanushkevich. The first decreed the mobilization of the four military districts of Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, and Kazan, as had already been provided for on July 24, 1914, and put in motion by the Russian general staff. Now it had the official sanction of the Russian autocrat. The second decree ordered a general mobilization, which followed, as we have shown, inexorably from a partial mobilization according to the planning of the general staff. The tsar, who was as poorly informed about the military strategy of his generals as he was about many affairs in his realm, was unaware of this. He had been led, unwittingly, into a trap from which he could no longer extricate himself, a trap which would see him and his family slaughtered and the Romanov dynasty expunged from Russia.

As everyone in St. Petersburg and Paris knew, mobilization meant war. From the first day of the Franco-Russian Alliance in 1894, this was understood. The

statements of the principal actors in the drama confirm it. General Obruchev, the Russian chief of staff at the time of the treaty, said, "Our mobilization should immediately be followed by acts of war." The tsar (at that time Alexander III) concurred: "That is just as I understand it." General Boisdeffre, who represented France in the negotiations, was equally explicit: "Mobilization is the declaration of war." René Guerin, the great French intellectual and patriot, who co-authored Les Responsabilités de la Guerre with Poincaré, wrote: "If my declared enemy aims a revolver at me, and if I know he is a good shot, I must conclude that he wishes to kill me, that he is going to kill me. Should I wait until he had fired to be certain of his intentions?" On July 28, 1914, the tsarist empire drew its guns. General Dobrorolsky, commander-in-chief of the Russian mobilization, was quite definite about it. As far as he was concerned, from the reception of the order to mobilize the march of events would be "automatic and irreversible." "I was called upon to set fire to the woodpile of the world," he would state, without batting an eye. The tsar, when he had allowed his minister, Sazonov, to extract the two mobilization orders from him, murmured, "Think of the thousands and thousands of men who are going to be sent to their deaths." He badly underestimated the coming slaughter. In Berlin Kaiser Wilhelm stood firm even as events hurtled toward disaster, still refusing to accept war as inevitable. No longer able to meet face to face with Nicholas, whom he might well have swayed, as he did once before, he had only the telegraph as his last resort. The tsar was now effectively the prisoner of his generals and his ministers. Behind them lashing them on, stood the French ambassador Paléologue, egged on by Poincaré. The German leaders tried in vain to budge the emperors of Russia and Austria. Wilhelm bombarded Austria's Franz Josef with telegrams urging negotiations with the Russian leadership. The kaiser sent similar messages to the tsar. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg exerted all his powers of threat and persuasion to convince his opposite number in the Austro-Hungarian government, Berchtold, to accept England's proposal that Belgrade be temporarily occupied by Austria while the great powers negotiated a solution to the impasse. He telegraphed his ambassador, Count Tschirschky: "We are, of course, completely prepared to do our duty as an ally, but we must refuse to let Vienna draw us into a worldwide conflagration, in disregard of our advice. I urge you to speak to Count Berchtold immediately and with great emphasis." Sixteen years later, Poincaré would acknowledge that Berchtold had replied to this affirmatively, and that he had been ready to waive compensation: when questioned by Tschirschky, who had received his instructions, Count Berchtold proved willing to declare that Austria made no territorial claims." (Poincaré, Les Responsabilités de la Guerre, p. 167) The message of Wilhelm II which reached Nicholas II at that time was equally emphatic: "I am using all my influence with the Austrians to get them to seek some basis of agreement with you without any mental reservations." Even in Wilhelm's absence his entreaties made a powerful impression on the tsar. Nicholas roused himself sufficiently to quit his apartment and descend to the front hall, where the only telephone in the palace was located. Mouth close to the receiver, he ordered the chief of the general staff, General Yanushkevich, to rescind the order for

general mobilization immediately, retaining only the order for partial mobilization. Yanushkevich, reinforced by Sukhomlinov, the minister of war, dared to call the tsar back to the telephone. According to them, a "regional" mobilization would throw the army into disorder, and make it impossible to carry out a general mobilization, the only mobilization that could be of any military value in the circumstances. The tsar's change of heart was all the more impraticable for the general staff because the general mobilization, unbeknownst to the tsar, was already under way. France's military attache in Moscow, Captain Laguiche, had learned on July 26th of Russian measures for mobilization in progress as far west as Warsaw, and informed his government by telegraph. By July 29th, the general Russian mobilization was being carried out almost openly along the Prussian border. One of General Dobrorolsky's reports noted: "In the Suwalki district, which abuts the border of East Prussia, the general mobilization had already begun." (L'Histoire démaquillée, p. 66) During the night of July 29-30, 1914, there ensued a crossfire of almost unbelievable telephone conversations. First the tsar himself, in a completely uncharacteristic interference for that weak-willed ruler, had called the chief of the general staff. Immediately afterwards Yanushkevich, instead of obeying his tsar, rang up the minister of war, Sukhomlinov. "What shall I do?" he asked the minister. Sukhomlinov replied immediately: "Don't do anything!" At the other end of the line, the chief of the general staff exclaimed "Thank God!" The direct, personal order of the tsar had been circumvented. The next morning, July 30th, Sukhomlinov lied to Nicholas, informing the tsar that he had complied with the order to cease the general mobilization and restrict the army's preparations to regional mobilization. In fact he was doing exactly the opposite. In 1917, when Sukhomlinov would stand trial for his numerous failings, he would confess publicly that "the following morning I lied to the tsar. I told him that the partial mobilization was limited to the command posts of the southwest." That morning it was also Sazonov's turn to lie to Nicholas. He explained to his sovereign that Austria was already carrying out military operations on Russian soil. This was totally untrue, as Sazonov was well aware, but it was needless to say highly persuasive to the vacillating monarch. The tsar sent Kaiser Wilhelm the following pathetic telegram: "I foresee that I am soon going to be overcome by the pressure being put on me, and I shall be forced to take extreme measures leading to war." Sazonov, pressing his advantage, routed the tsar from his chambers, where he and the tsarina were tending their son, the little hemophiliac crown prince. Tsarina Alexandra, nerves at the breaking point, sought to counsel her husband not to give in, for she loathed the Grand Dukes and their Pan-Slavist obsession. Then Sazonov let fly the arrow that would strike this proud but devoted wife and mother to the quick. He told her, "You are asking the tsar to sign his own death warrant." This threat, scarcely veiled, had been confirmed by George Malcolm Thomson, who wrote, "Nobody should put aside as impossible any wild outcome of those feverish hours in the tsar's palace by the sea." It was blackmail by threat of assassination. The tsar received a final telegram from the kaiser:

> "My ambassador has instructions to draw the attention of your gov-

> ernment to the serious dangers and consequences of a mobilization. Austria-Hungary has mobilized only against Serbia and only a part of her army. If Russia mobilizes against Austria-Hungary, the role of mediator which you have accepted in accordance with your express wish, will be threatened, if not rendered impossible. The entire weight of the decision now rests on your shoulders, yours to bear the responsibility of war or peace. Willy."

The burden of decision was crushing Nicholas II. His evasions at an end, he now received the war party in is office. Ushered in, they lined up facing the tsar, the Minister of War, his generals, the civilian officials. Sazonov, speaking clearly and decisively, challenged the tsar: "I don't think Your Majesty should hesitate any longer to make the decree of general mobilization effective again." Again the tsar murmured his argument: "Consider that it means sending tens of thousands of men to die." Sazonov: "The halting of our mobilization would upset our military organization and disconcert our allies." Another imposture of Sazonov's, by which he implied that the French would be shocked at the tsar's torpor and think that he was violating the terms of their alliance. At that moment, of course, Poincaré, just returned from his journey, was playing the role of the innocent in Paris. Finally everyone fell silent. The tsar, eyes bulging, his face a sickly yellow, made no reply. He stood motionless, as if petrified. Suddenly General Tatishev broke the silence: "Yes, it is a difficult decision." The tsar started as though he'd been slapped. He paced back and forth, and then looked straight at his audience. "I am the one who decides." And he decided. He ordered Sazonov to telephone Yanushkevich that he was again signing a decree for general mobilization. Thomson has fixed the scene forever: "The tension in the room broke. Sazonov rose, bowed, and almost ran to the telephone on the floor below. He passed the order triumphantly to Yanushkevich, adding, 'Now you can smash your telephone.' "

Chapter 12

Tragic Farce

At the very time when Tsar Nicholas was yielding to the pressures of the war faction, President Poincaré was landing from the cruiser France at Dunkirk early on the morning of July 29th. His return trip to France had been occupied with laying a smokescreen of alibis against any accusations that he was plotting war. Paléologue had delayed dispatching telegrams to Paris after the proclamation of the Russian general mobilization, and in some cases had refrained from sending telegrams at all, in order to maintain Poincaré's facade of ignorance as to what the Russian war party was doing. On July 26th Paléologue had held up the transmission of the French attache, Laguiche's, telegram reporting on the clandestine beginning of mobilization. Nevertheless, when Poincaré was met by Minister Renoult in the presidential train at Dunkirk, the president told his minister, "It can't be settled peaceably." For someone who claimed to have heard nothing for six days, he seemed awfully certain. Poincaré's bald endorsement of war was in fact not a true statement. Even as he spoke, efforts to calm the situation were under way in Vienna and even in St. Petersburg. The Kaiser's entreaties and those of his chancellor had begun to sway Franz Josef and Berchtold. Count Berchtold had modified his demands on Serbia and was now willing to consider dropping the Austrian government's demand for a joint Austrian-Serbian investigation into the assassination of the archduke. According to Fabre Luce: "It was no longer a question of mere camouflage. No! A note written in Berchtold's hand shows that even on that day, July 30, 1914, he was disposed to compromise on the Serbian investigation, if Russia, on her part, accepted the provisional Austrian occupation of Belgrade." (L'Histoire démaquillée, p. 75.) Sometimes danger has a calming effect. Never, perhaps, since the crime of June 28th had the parties been so close to a settlement.

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When Poincaré arrived in Paris on the morning of the twenty-ninth, he was met by a triumphal reception at the St. Lazare station, one that had been prepared by his aides but which was none the less fervent. Tens of thousands

of Frenchmen, stirred to a fever pitch by a chauvinistic press, jammed the sidewalks along the route to the Elysée palace, acclaiming the president as if he were NapoLéon returned in triumph from Elba. The crowd surged to the Place de la Concorde to mass in front of the black-draped statues of Metz and Strasbourg. Had Poincaré not been a staunch Freemason, they might have offered him a Te Deum at Notre-Dame Cathedral. He received a secular beatification in any case. Strange, this excitement in view of Poincaré's protestations of ignorance at the rush of events during his cruise; strange, that patriotic crowds should heap acclaim on this allegedly befuddled traveler. The man in the street, at least, had instinctively penetrated Poincaré's alleged fog of ignorance and loved him all the more for his imposture. But now the hour approached in which, after two weeks of subterfuge, it would be necessary for Poincaré to strike the final blow for war, all the while conveying the impression that he had none but peaceful intentions. Immediately after his triumphal march from the station to his palace Poincaré summoned three men to the Elysée: his premier, the complaisant Viviani; Great Britain's ambassador, Sir Francis Bertie; and the consummate wirepuller from Russia, Aleksandr Izvolsky. The French president and the Russian ambassador went to work on the urbane ambassador from Britain, dressed like a banker from the city with his pearl gray silk hat and his elegant green-lined umbrella. It was a strange session: the two long-time conspirators, Poincaré and Izvolsky, were forced to disguise their joint machinations of the immediate past while at the same time feigning an entirely false amity. The truth is the two men hated one another, as was to emerge from their statements and writings after the war. Izvolsky would claim that Poincaré was a liar who had deceived everyone (he wasn't alone in his sentiments; Poincaré's minister of the interior, Louis Jean Malvy, would describe his former president as "an egoist, a double-dealer, and a coward"). In 1922, before the Chamber of Deputies, Poincaré would claim that every French minister knew he had never trusted Izvolsky. He would also write, with something less than veracity, "If T had been able to read the telegrams he [Izvolsky] was sending his government, I'd no doubt have noted many passages in them that would have justified the instinctive mistrust that he inspired in us, in my colleagues and me." Thus the men who had schemed together to corrupt public opinion in France on one another! The British ambassador wasn't buying their cajolery. He made no commitment. As always, he replied that he would refer the matter to his government. It was at this meeting, however, that Poincaré gave Izvolsky categorical assurance of France's support for Russia's mobilization, an assurance for which Poincaré was to sidestep the responsibility after the war. When the collaborator on Poincaré's account of the origins of the war, Guerin, asked Poincaré about the outcome of that meeting, the former French president replied simply, "Ask Malvy." Minister Malvy was well aware of what transpired at the Elysée palace that afternoon. That evening he called on his friend Joseph Caillaux in a highly agitated state to convey the news, writing down the conversation on the spot. Malvy: "Russia asked us if we could mobilize. We answered yes. We have committed ourselves to support her." Caillaux: "Then you are going beyond the conditions of the alliance!" Malvy remained silent. Caillaux: "Of course, you made certain of England's

agreement?" Malvy: "There was no question of England." (The British ambassador had left the meeting before the question arose.) Caillaux: "Scoundrels! You have started a war!" The Soviet Black Book would include the text of the telegram which a gleeful Izvolsky sent to Sazonov that afternoon after leaving the palace: "France is in full agreement with us!" It was that telegram which Sazonov used the following day to overcome the resistance of the tsar to the definitive unleashing of the Russian war machine.

* * *

Had Poincaré been sincerely for peace he might still have restrained the Pan-Slavist warmongers around the tsar, even as Kaiser Wilhelm and Bethmann-Hollweg were exerting all their powers of persuasion to restrain their allies in Austria-Hungary. Germany had no desire to go to war with France, but the nature of the Reich's encirclement by France and the mighty Russian empire made a desperate German offensive against France a necessity if hostilities seemed unavoidable, as they would if the Russians mobilized. Such was the trap that Poincaré and the Pan-Slavists had laid for Germany. Laying a trap for Germans was of course not an obligation imposed on the French government by its agreement with the Russian leaders. France's president, had he been willing, might have declined to aid the Russians in their plot against the Germans, just as the Russian government declined to pledge its unconditional support to France in the Moroccan affair two years before. At that time Izvolsky had indicated to the French that "Russia remains true to her alliance without question, but she would be hard put to persuade the Russian people to go to war over Morocco. Moreover, our alliance is only a defensive one." Or, as Tsar Nicholas had expressed it to the French ambassador, "I don't envisage a war except for totally vital interests." For Poincaré, however, the recovery of Alsace and Lorraine was a vital interest, and provoking a German attack, which would eliminate the need for troublesome debates in the French assembly, was the way to attain it. His crafty, stealthy maneuvering, carried out with the knowledge of a handful of trusted political henchmen, was a marvel of hypocrisy and efficiency on the Machiavellian model. Poincaré would have his war, and Germany would bear the brunt of the world's moral outrage. Poincaré's secrecy led to a night of comical and frantic misapprehensions for two of his ministers. At a little past midnight the French minister of war, Adolphe Messimy, was awakened at his house. He had a visitor, and an obstreperous one at that: Colonel Ignatiev, the Russian military attache, who'd obviously had quite a bit to drink. The colonel was bringing the official message from the Russian government, one of thanks for France's support for Russian mobilization. Rubbing his eyes, Messimy - still unaware of Poincaré's assurance that afternoon - tried to conceal his astonishment. He immediately telephoned Viviani, who replied volubly. "Mon Dieu!" he exclaimed. "It is evident that the Russians are sleepwalkers and drunkards. I've just had Izvolsky here. Tell Ignatiev to avoid fireworks at any cost." Was Viviani's astonished indignation genuine? Was the premier oblivious to Poincaré's machinations and Paléologue's activity in St. Petersburg? To be sure, Paléologue's telegrams had been arriving late, sent by a circuitous route to support

Poincaré's claims that the French government had been in the dark while Russia mobilized. But one historian believes that Viviani's amazement was a pose. Fabre Luce writes: He [Viviani] wasn't suffering so much from the annoyances of being roused in the middle of the night as from finding himself under the necessity of assuming the responsibility that he had to avoid. What did "those Russians" need an official confirmation for? Couldn't they take the hint that the support given them unstintingly at St. Petersburg remained valid? What blockheads! The telegram sent from the armored cruiser, and the promise of support, renewed the day before in Paris, wasn't enough for them then. Thoughts such as these must surely have passed through the mind of the president of the council of ministers, who was also the minister of foreign affairs.

Viviani was handed a telegram by Izvolsky. It came from Sazonov and included the words, "I express our sincere thanks to the French government for the official declaration that we can count on the full cooperation of our ally." But the telegram went beyond the terms of Poincaré's muttered assurances to lzvolsky. It continued, "We have now only to speed up our armament and face the imminence of war." Clearly Viviani hadn't been informed of everything! Off he hastened to the Elysée Palace, where the president of France was in his turn routed from his slumber and forced to dress hurriedly. Poincaré was in no mood to calm Viviani. He snapped, "We'll take that question up at the council meeting, in a few hours," and then went back to bed. Back at Messimy's residence, Ignatiev was demanding an official reply to his minister's telegram, and, fortified by inebriate impetuosity, refusing to leave before he got one. Messimy, trying to temporize, told him the Russians would have to slow down their mobilization. Ignatiev replied vehemently, with an appropriate metaphor, under the circumstances: "You don't mobilize by degrees, the way you drink a cocktail." Fishing for a formula that would enable him and his colleagues to evade responsibility, Viviani hit on the idea of a "secret" Russian mobilization. He told Messimy to inform the colonel that Russia should mobilize its southern army corps provided France wasn't informed. To Sazonov, Viviani telegraphed that France acquiesced in Russia's "precautionary and defensive measures," thereby giving Germany no pretext to mobilize. Again the French leaders had played into the hands of Russia's warmongers. Fabre Luce had described the scene and its implications well. Messimy and Ignatiev embrace each other silently, and the Russian will later remark: "I was like a man who has a great weight lifted from his shoulders." Apparently, despite all the assurances received, he had wondered right up to the last moment whether France, a country with a peace-loving majority and a signatory to a defensive alliance, was really going to accept the mobilization- aggression on the part of Russia, and now, yes! The Rubicon was crossed. The French leaders made a choice, but they tried to hide their decision. They played with the idea of a secret mobilization, when ordinary good sense and the statements of the Russians confirmed that it was impossible. Paléologue knew it: a Russian document attested to it, but he pretended to enter into the game and telegraphed, on the evening of the 30th, that the Russian government has decided 'to proceed secretly with the first steps of the general mobilization.'

The government had quite simply proclaimed that mobilization. (*L'Histoire démaquillée*, pp. 70f.) It was this French assurance of support that had enabled the Russian ministers and generals to pressure theTsar, to continue mobilizing against his order, and at last to cut off his telephone so that he couldn't go back on his final decision for war.

On the same night General Count Helmut von Moltke, chief of the German general staff, was living through increasingly anxious hours. He risked nothing less than the loss of the war if he let the Russians steal the march and mobilize to overrun Germany. Now everything indicated that their mobilization was under way. The nephew of the great Moltke, Bismarck's right arm, victor over Austria and France, this younger Moltke lacked the temperament and willpower of his illustrious uncle. He admitted, "I lack the power of rapid decision. I think too much. I don't have the temperament to risk everything on a throw of the dice." Outwardly the general cut a magnificent figure, as impressive as Michelangelo's Moses, but he was at least as much an aesthete as a fighting man. He read a great deal, preferably weightier authors like Nietzsche and Carlyle. A fervant admirer of the Flemish writer Maeterlinck, he had translated that author's Pelléas and Mélisande into German. He painted and played the violin, and, influenced by his wife, dabbled in the murky waters of theosophy. Unlike other Germans, such as Count von Bülow, he feared Russian expansionism. Moltke was traumatized by the prospects of millions of hardy Russian serfs, their immense realm stretching from the Memel to Vladivostok, inured to privation and trained to blind obedience, falling like an avalanche on a Germany already menaced by a powerful French army, the two forces outnumbering the German army by four to one. Moltke saw the Russian strength growing from year to year. Russia's chief weakness, the poor network of transportation and communications which served its vast territory, was being steadily improved thanks to a massive influx of French francs arranged by Poincaré. A major new railway network was growing towards Prussia and in a matter of several years would enable the rapid and orderly transfer of millions of troops to Germany's Eastern border. As of July 1914, Russian military progress toward Germany was still slow and cumbersome. Railway tracks and roadbeds were still inadequate, and travel over them was slow and jolting. The great majority of Russian troops would have to advance over poor roads on foot. Nevertheless, Russian measures for war had been progressing for weeks. The Siberians had been called to European Russia, and the army groups of the West were moving toward the frontier. Germany's only strategic plan, the Schlieffen plan, anticipated forty days of fighting against the French, to be carried out by the great bulk of Germany's armies. Only then could substantial forces be shifted to the eastern front. Every day that passed now eroded the Germans' margin of safety in the east. To the German generals, every day spent negotiating with the Russian leaders, while the Russian armies continued to mass and to move forward, brought their nation closer to military disaster.

Chapter 13

Death of a Pacifist

Each day the dispatches received in Berlin from the German diplomats in St. Petersburg were more disturbing. On July 30, 1914, a telegram from the ambassador, Pourtalès, dispensed with all further doubt. It listed, one by one, the districts in western Russia where mobilization was in full swing. In the Warsaw district, at that time near Germany's eastern border, and in Suwalki, on the threshold of East Prussia, the progress of the Russian mobilization couldn't be concealed. German spies and informers, as well as the German consul at Allenge, stressed the imminence of Russia's advance. Preparations were visible even from the German sentry boxes on the frontier, across which the Russian troops were hastily demolishing their border outposts, and from which flames now blazed in the night. By that evening Moltke had confirmed from reliable sources that the Russian mobilization was effective and total. The next morning he telegraphed his colleague in Austria, General Conrad von Hötzendorff: "Mobilize! Germany will mobilize with you!" Even then the kaiser was still seeking to steer Austria's Franz Josef toward negotiation with the Russians. The Austrian emperor's foreign minister, Berchtold, was confused by the conflicting messages from Berlin. "Who is in command at Berlin?" he exclaimed. "Von Moltke or the Kaiser?" To be sure, von Moltke had temporarily exceeded his perogatives. But on that morning Pourtalès had been able to confront Sazonov in St. Petersburg with a public mobilization poster. Time was growing short for the Germans, and even Kaiser Wilhelm was losing faith in a peaceful solution. The message of the tsar, that he could no longer resist the pressures of his advisers, had reached him on the 30th, and Wilhelm had conceded, "My mission as a peacemaker is over." Meanwhile, in Paris, Poincaré was about to be rid of the last consequential French opponent of his war schemes. Jean Jaurès, leader of the French socialists, and president of the Second International, was a cultivated man. He was well versed in the Latin and Greek classics, and had learned Spanish to read Don Quixote in the original, as well as English to tackle Hume and Shakespeare. A magnificent orator who, despite his piercing blue eyes, hailed from the south of France, he lived a respectable, indeed

bourgeois life. He had none of the venality which had enabled so many French politicians to pile up private fortunes from their public (and not so public) activities. On July 29th in Brussels, Jaurès had made a last effort to stop the war by addressing a great convocation of socialist leaders from all over Europe, gathered under the auspices of the Second International at the Royal Circus, a vast stately hall where this writer would address the Brussel's public for the first time thirty years later. That day Jaurès was particularly moving, for to him, the peace of Europe had never been more menaced since the NapoLéonic wars of a century before. Great cries of "Down with war!" had rung out at the conclusion of his speech, many undoubtedly from the same throats that would a few days later give their passionate assent to war in parliaments and national assemblies across Europe. Jaurès left the hall with heavy foreboding despite his tumultuous sendoff. He had time to see the Flemish Primitives in all their splendor at the Brussels Museum before catching the train to Paris. In Paris Jaurès proceeded directly to the Foreign Ministry to try to exact a promise from Viviani that the government would try to calm the Russians. When he learned that Poincaré had just given full support to the Russian mobilization, he warned Viviani: "You are victims of Izvolsky and of a Russian plot. We are going to denounce you feather-brained ministers, even if we're shot at." As Jaurès left the building on the Quai d'Orsay he encountered lzvolsky. Staring him hard in the face, he said, "This scum Izvolsky is going to have his war." That evening Jaurès read in a newspaper: "If France had a leader who was a man, Jaurès would be put up against the wall at the same time as the mobilization posters." Shaking his head, he said under his breath, "We must expect to be assassinated at the first street corner." That same night a young man was snooping around Jaurès house at Passy. When Jaurès approached with several friends, the young man, whose name was Raoul Villain, asked an onlooker which one was Jaurès. On learning, he slipped away into the darkness. On the next morning, while the streets of Paris teemed with demonstrators and frightened holders of bank accounts (withdrawals of more than fifty francs from checking accounts had just been forbidden), Villain searched for his prey. Unsuccessful at Jaurès newspaper office, Villain finally traced the great socialist leader to his cafe, the Croissant. Then Jaurès sat admiring a photograph of a journalist friend's granddaughter. The window behind his table was open, only a curtain separating Jaurès from the street. Imperceptibly a hand pushed the cloth aside. Then there was a flash, and two shots split the air. Jaurès slumped over his plate. A woman screamed, "Jaurès has been killed!," and the last great opponent of the war joined those slain at Sarajevo. The rumor ran through Paris that Jaurès had been shot by a tsarist agent, forcing the government to blockade the Rue de Grenelle, where the Russian embassy stood like a citadel and where the Russian secret police, the Okhrana, had its Paris headquarters (the Russian embassy today houses the offices of the Okhrana's far more powerful successor, the KGB). No evidence was ever produced that the Russian secret service was behind Jaurès's assassination, and it is likely that Villain, the son of a madman, a fanatical nationalist whose mind had been inflamed by the stridency of the warmongering press, acted alone. Nevertheless, his bullets were as effective

against the last great voice against the war in France as had been those of the Russian conspirators' hirelings against the archducal couple in Sarajevo. On the same day that Jaurès was gunned down Poincaré succeeded in having Caillaux, his erstwhile opponent, who had been brought low by Calmette of the Figaro, hustled out of Paris by two policemen. Now the road to Berlin lay open.

Chapter 14

The Lies of Politicians

The atmosphere in Berlin on the morning of August 1, 1914, was one of deep gloom. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg paced the carpeted floors of his office in long strides, scarcely comprehending what was going on, looking at the future with deep foreboding. According to Malcolm Thomson: As the evening wore on, gloom deepened in the Foreign Office in Berlin. When Theodor Wolff of the Berliner Tageblatt looked in he found a silence like the grave in the midst of which diplomats brooded in the old-fashioned armchairs. The old Hungarian nobleman Szögyény, who was the Austrian ambassador, looked like one from whom despair had drained the last drop of blood. Jagow [the German foreign minister] padded in and out with a fixed, ambiguous smile. In Vienna Chancellor Berchtold was scarcely in a better state. Impeccable as ever in his detachable collar and cravat fixed with a pearl stickpin, he was stuffing himself with sleeping pills. He had failed to detect the Russian hand behind the Serbian conspiracy, rendering his bluster at the Belgrade government less than useless. The German Kaiser found his imprudence unpardonable. Would that he had watered his fine Tokay wine a bit during that fateful July! It would have been much better to be clear-headed. Now it was too late: the Russian army would soon be crossing the borders of Austria-Hungary. In St. Petersburg, the leaders of the war faction were assailed by a last flurry of panic. The Great War was really on. Sukhomlinov, the minister of war, was quaking in his boots. He had set up a number of icons and votive candles on his desk, and crossed himself frequently.

Perhaps alone in a calm state, Wilhelm II refused to order the German army to mobilize, despite von Moltke's anguished pleas. Although, as the Franco-German commission on the origins of the war was to recognize in 1935, "the Russian general mobilization created a new fait accompli that urgently called for a German decision," it was not until seven o'clock on the evening of July 31st that the Kaiser went so far as to decree a state of Kriegsgefahrzustand, a "status of war alert," which was still only a preliminary measure to mobilization. Kriegsgefahrzustand-a rumbling, ominous Teutonism, which propagandists in

France immediately seized on to conjure up images of Hunnish hordes set to swarm across the border. Their leader, Tardieu, who was fluent in German, mendaciously assured the populace that the word meant that the Germans had just declared a "state of war," unleashing nationwide hysteria. How could France hesitate to fly to arms, if Germany was already on the march?

Alone of the French leaders, Abel Ferry, under-secretary of state, an honest patriot who would die in battle, had recognized his superiors' maneuvering for what it was. In his notebook he wrote: "The web was spun and Germany entered it like a great buzzing fly." Kaiser Wilhelm was thinking along similar lines. On the same day he reflected, "The net has fallen on our heads." Germany had blundered into the trap. Fabre Luce would later write: "This whole history unfortunately leaves no room for any doubt. France didn't enter into war following an obligation of honor, as our rulers have often pretended, but, on the contrary, in violation of the treaty of defensive alliance which she had concluded with Russia, and of the republican constitution of 1875."

On August 1st, at six o'clock, the German ambassador, Pourtalès, called on Foreign Minister Sazonov to gain an answer to Germany's plea that Russia halt its mobilization. Sazonov replied, "Our mobilization must be continued. That understood, we are prepared to continue negotiations." Negotiating now, while continuing to mobilize, was only a Russian means of playing for time. Pourtalès pressed the point: "I repeat, Excellency, will you stop your mobilization?" Sazonov remained immobile, his eyes intent. Pourtalès repeated his question, once, twice. Sazonov answered, "I have no other reply to give you." Pourtalès offered a sheet of paper in a trembling hand, then began to sob. Germany had declared war on Russia.

In spite of everything the German ambassador in Paris, Baron von Schoen, made a last offer on July 31st to avert war between France and Germany. As everyone recognized, Russia unaided would be no match for Germany and Austria-Hungary. The baron brought his government's final proposal to Viviani: if France remained neutral, Germany would also remain neutral. It would afterwards be claimed that the German government had demanded at this time that the great French fortresses of Toul and Verdun be turned over to Germany as a guarantee of French neutrality, since the French were later to decipher a telegram to Schoen to that effect, but in fact the ambassador made no mention of such a demand and the French were unaware of it at the time. Viviani's answer to the German ambassador had nothing to do with the right and high principles with which French spokesmen were wont to couch their official rhetoric. It came in seven cold words: "France will be guided by her interests." In this case, of course, France's interest meant cutting her powerful German rival down to size and seizing Alsace and Lorraine once more. Poincaré's public declaration was more in keeping with the flowery hypocrisies of the Third Republic: "At this hour there are no longer any parties, there is only France, peace-loving and resolute; there is only France eternal; there is only the Fatherland of Right and Justice." Right had a broad back, and Poincaré would ride it for several years.

The day before, Austria-Hungary had attempted a last appeal to the French government, presented by emissaries from neutral Romania and Switzerland. Romania's Lahovary and Switzerland's Lardy brought the proposal to the Quai d'Orsay, where Secretary General Berthelot coldly rejected it. "It is too late," he said. "It is no longer possible to set matters straight." Later it would emerge that Berthelot had not even bothered to transmit the Austrian proposal to his chief, Viviani. Meanwhile the French generals, no less than their counterparts in Russia, were pressing for a swift mobilization. General Joffre reported that every twenty-four hours' delay in mobilizing would mean a pullback of fifteen to twenty kilometers - which would have left the French army at the foot of the Eiffel Tower in a month's time. The generals shortly had their wish. At 3:45 p.m. on August 1st, Messimy, the minister of war, transmitted the order for general mobilization to the deputy chief of the general staff, General Ebene. Posters bloomed colorfully throughout the cities, towns, and villages of France, as if an electoral campaign were under way. It would be a landslide for death.

Once again the Poincaré government would manufacture a face-saving lie. Like their allies in Russia, who claimed to have begun mobilizing only after Austria had begun, the Poincaré government claimed that it was Germany which had forced their hand by mobilizing first. The fact of the matter is that the German order to mobilize came at five o'clock in the afternoon, fifteen minutes after the French order (Berlin and Paris are in different time zones). These lies would be told and retold over the years, sturdy bricks in the edifice of German war guilt. Although Poincaré would be forced to admit in 1923 that indeed the Russians had mobilized before the Austrians , he would claim that he had been honestly mistaken. Even so, standard works in France, such as Bonifacio's Manual of History, the mainstay of French students, continued to date Russia's mobilization from July 31, 1914 forty years after the war. So it is with the lies of politicians, especially victorious politicians. Their lying declarations command widespread belief at the time; when, much later, rectification is made, most people are no longer interested, especially when the truth appears only in the thick and recondite works of historical specialists.

In fact, so nervous was Poincaré about the prospect of Germany not mobilizing at an opportune time for French propaganda that he proposed to his ministers that France contrive an incident on the German border. Although the council rejected it as too provocative and dangerous, Malvy revealed Poincaré's proposal after the war. As Fabre Luce summed up, "At the beginning of August 1914, Wilhelm II, by hesitating to attack France for the moment, was jeopardizing the script. Hence the notion put forward by Poincaré to the council of ministers to create a border incident, so that he would not have the parliament discussing his interpretation of the Franco-Russian treaty of alliance."

Chapter 15

A Sudden Zig-zag

How came the emotion-laden final act. Millions of Russians were under arms. Great masses of French plowmen and mustachioed vinegrowers (at this time 47 per cent of the French were still farmers) streamed to the railway stations, forming a great river of olive drab. To the cheers of millions they entrained in coaches daubed with "On to Berlin!" In Vienna, throngs roared "Death to Serbia!," and the Germans of Berlin roared their anthem with no less ebullience. Only Great Britain, among the great powers of Europe, still wavered in official indecision. The government of Herbert Henry Asquith was profoundly divided over whether to join the revanchistes of France and the Pan-Slavist imperialists of Russia or to maintain Britain's splendid isolation and cultivate its far-flung empire. In the end, the British leadership, blind in its lordly arrogance, would let its short-term resentments over Germany's burgeoning economic power prevail over its long-term interests in checking the growth of the colossus which stretched from Warsaw to Vladivostok.

Perhaps the key issue for the British leadership was its consternation at the expansion of the German navy and merchant fleet. This fear was magnified by Kaiser Wilhelm's tendency to bluster, but in reality his bark was worse than his bite. Britain's leaders might have learned this from the American political manager and wirepuller, "Colonel" Edward Mandell House, Woodrow Wilson's eminence grise, who talked to Wilhelm while on a fact-finding mission in Europe at Wilson's behest in June 1914. House, certainly no Germanophile, reported that the Kaiser had impressed on him with great urgency that he was building his great fleet not to oppose England, but to increase German prestige on the high seas, as well as to promote German commerce. Wilhelm stated: "I want peace, because the interests of Germany require it. Germany was poor, but now she is in the process of becoming rich; and a few years of peace will make her quite rich." Great Britain's foreign minister, when communicated these sentiments by House, was impressed by them. Grey admitted to House that "the Germans need to maintain a navy that is proportionate to the importance of

their commerce and big enough to defend themselves against a combined attack by the Russian and French fleets." House doubtless also told the British diplomat of Wilhelm's desire to end his naval construction program after those ships under construction or already planned were built. In the eyes of many Britishers, however, each German ship completed was one too many. Nothing struck at the British sense of self-esteem and self-preservation more acutely than any perceived threat to British domination of the world's oceans. Wilhelm hadn't the sensitivity and tact to recognize that, as a far more clever player of the diplomatic game, Adolf Hitler, did in 1935 when he conceded British naval superiority vis-à-vis Germany. The traditional disregard of the average Briton for affairs on the continent also weighed against the Germans. Magnificently aloof, they paid little heed to the implications of the assassination in Sarajevo, which, as House brutally put it, aroused in Britain "no more stir than a tenor singing in the middle of a boiler shop." In the end, it all came down to the hoary balance of power game, by which Britain's rulers had promoted a divided Europe, no matter what the cost to the West, for three centuries. The clever, urbane, and slippery Grey drawled at a cabinet meeting as the Sarajevo crisis heated to a boil, "That would be a stroke of luck, having the Germans and Slays go at each other." Prudently he had added, "The game could become dangerous." A few voices warned of the dangers of the growth of the tsarist superstate. House had pointed out the danger of a too powerful Russia, as well as Germany's value as a buffer. The Liberal leader, John Morley, one of Britain's most upright ministers, was of like mind. He asked: "What would happen if Russia should be victorious in the long run? Have you ever thought about that? If Germany is defeated and Austria is defeated, it will not be England and France that will occupy the first place in Europe. It will be Russia. Will Western civilization get any advantage out of that?" Stalin would finally answer that question in 1945. Despite the case for non-intervention, the Asquith government was dominated by a fear of offending the regimes of France and Russia. Grey neglected to communicate with the Germans to the end of negotiating peace because, in his words, "I prefer to refrain from sending any official communication, written or verbal, for fear of offending the French and the Russians, should either of them get wind of the matter." He said it again to his cabinet: "England must necessarily act with prudence for fear of offending the feelings of France and Russia."

For fear of offending the members of a defensive alliance in which Great Britain was unquestionably the key member, 947,000 men of the British Isles would go to their deaths. Kaiser Wilhelm's last, chimeric hopes for peace, with England as with Russia, came down to the reigning monarch. In Britain it was George V, Wilhelm's cousin, scion of a royal family not noted for its powers of intellect. George was a decorous mediocrity, timorous and a bit on the deceitful side, a fragile hope to take a stand for peace, particularly in a nation in which the powers of the sovereign were so carefully circumscribed. We have noted the fiasco of George V's promise to Wilhelm's younger brother, Prince Henry, stating quite plainly that Great Britain would observe neutrality. Although Wilhelm was

beside himself with joy when he received the news ("I have the word of a king!"), Churchill, as we have seen, already had the fleet steaming for the Channel. On July 29, 1914, Grey sent for Germany's ambassador, Prince Lichnowsky, to shake him with this message: "A European catastrophe is to be feared from one day to the next. If the conflict remains limited to one between Austria and Russia, England will be able to stand aside; if not, England will no longer be in a position to remain neutral indefinitely." He continued, "It is far from my thought to express a threat. I simply wish to spare you a deception and to avoid, on my part, the reproach of having been lacking in sincerity." For all Grey's protestations of sincerity, he had sent messages to all the embassies informing them of the virtual end of British neutrality even before receiving Lichnowsky. That evening Asquith told his wife that he had dispatched telegrams to all parts of the empire, informing the governments and administrations to prepare for war. Wickham Steed, editor of the Times, returned to his office from a confidential cabinet interview with the words "Everything is lost" on his lips. For the former prime minister, Arthur James Balfour, the sight of passersby promenading down Cockspur Street was a bitter one. "War is rushing down upon them," he said to himself.

Wilhelm II received Lichnowsky's report of his conversation with Grey with outrage, and unleashed a series of rich imprecations against perfodious Albion. He quickly recovered his equilibrium, however, and began to study what measures remained to keep the peace. He knew of Russia's ongoing mobilization, but Poincaré's maneuverings were as yet a secret. His last card remained the unlikely intervention of his cousin, George V. That sovereign was sleeping when his prime minister, Asquith, asked to be received. The king, once roused, threw on his dressing gown and applied himself to replying to his cousin's plea for neutrality in terms with which his ministers could agree. The text of the telegram bore a last hope for peace. The German ambassador reported to Berlin that Grey had promised not to intervene if Germany did not attack France, and asked for a German statement on that matter. Lichnowsky informed his government that he had promised that to Grey, as he had been authorized, and that Grey would communicate the statement to the cabinet. A telegram is of value only when it is received, however. Lichnowsky was only able to send it from London on the morning of August 1st, after a ten- hour delay, and it arrived in Berlin another five hours later. The wasted fifteen hours seem almost certainly accounted for by the delaying tactics of the anti-German faction in the Asquith government and in the British Establishment. Nevertheless, when the news finally arrived, it seemed a providential opportunity to stave off war. Ominously enough, however, when news of the British government's apparent reversal of policy was telegraphed to the British ambassador in Paris, Sir Francis Bertie, the ambassador failed to inform the French government. Bertie, a supporter of Poincaré's policies, was in open rebellion against his government. As the hours wore on, and the telegram remained undelivered, the British government made a sudden zigzag in its course, as it had done so often in the past. This time it was George V, last repository of the tenuous hopes for peace in Europe, who

was thrown overboard.

Chapter 16

Britain on the Brink

Kaiser Wilhelm received word of the offer of British neutrality as he rode in a magnificent cavalcade from his palace at Potsdam to the palace in Berlin. The Kaiser was resplendent in full military uniform, his Junoesque wife beside him in the open carriage dressed in a stunning purple gown. As the cheers of Berliners resounded at the entrance to the palace, Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and his undersecretary of state, Jagow, rushed up with the telegram. Reading it swiftly, the Kaiser burst out joyfully, "Some champagne! This deserves champagne!" Only one man in the palace restrained his enthusiasm. When Wilhelm grasped him by the shoulders, and told him to halt the army's westward advance, General Count von Moltke turned white. He stammered, "But that's impossible! The entire army would be plunged into frightful confusion, and we'd have no chance of winning the war!" Indeed, it was true: a dreadful mess did loom. The well-oiled German war machine was just springing into action. Hundreds of thousands of troops were boarding trains about to depart for the west. The conductors awaited the final signal. Every station had its plan; every engineer his precise instructions; the schedules had all been determined long in advance. Now von Moltke had been ordered not only to stop the movement westward, but to turn it completely around: Germany's armies were to advance eastward against Russia. Moltke's protests were unavailing. He told his emperor, "If I can not march against France, I can not assume responsibility for the war," to which Wilhelm shot back, "Your uncle would have given me a different answer!" Moltke was visibly disturbed; in the office of his aide-de-camp he suffered a collapse. Nevertheless, he transmitted the Kaiser's order to the vanguard of the German forces, the 17th Division, which was about to advance into the neutral Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and cross into France. Before Moltke's order could become effective, several units of the 17th's vanguard had crossed the border. It was seven o'clock in the evening, and sixty German troops were seizing the railroad station at the little town of Trois Vierges and tearing out the telephone and telegraph facilities. Half an hour later, frantic German couriers were able to reach the little advance guard and bring them back across the border, after

telling the harried Luxembourgers that it had all been a regrettable mistake.

Could the fragile truce hold? That evening Wilhelm telegraphed his reply to the British. He informed the Asquith government and King George that while he could not halt Germany's mobilization on either front, he would refrain from attacking France if that nation pledged its neutrality, to be guaranteed by the British. A few hours later came a crushing message from King George: Britain's previous offer had been no more than the result of "a misapprehension." The text ran: "In reply to your telegram which I have just received, I think there must be some misapprehension with respect to a suggestion made during a friendly conversation between Prince Lichnowsky and Sir Edward Grey that afternoon when they were discussing how an actual combat between the German and French armies could be avoided while there was still some chance of agreement between Austria and Russia. Sir Edward Grey will undertake to see Prince Lichnowsky early tomorrow morning to see if there is a misapprehension on his part." Another stunning blow! For the second time in a matter of hours, Germany's military preparations were upset. At seven o'clock the momentum had been changed from west to east. Now at eleven, the armies had to swing around ponderously toward the west again.

The Kaiser, who had retired for the night, had to be roused from bed. Sitting at the edge of his bed in his drawers, he registered Moltke's embarrassment and threw a military greatcoat over his shoulders. He told his chief of staff, "Now you may follow your own counsel. March on Luxembourg." The German army had now fallen half a day behind the French. Meanwhile, across the Channel, Churchill had taken it on himself to mobilize the entire Royal Navy. Despite the lack of authorization by the cabinet, Grey supported the First Lord of the Admiralty. He confided to Churchill that he had told the French that Britain would not permit the German fleet to enter the Channel. All this while Wilhelm was rejoicing at the receipt of George V's peace offer.

In overcoming the resistance of substantial sections of the British public to an intervention in the war on the Continent, the British war faction and French diplomacy had beaten some powerful foes. Substantial interests of big capital, including the Jewish investment bankers, led by the Rothschilds, were for their own reasons not eager for British participation. Liberal voices, particularly powerful in the press, were strong in opposing any alliance with tsarist Russia. Yet the deft diplomacy of Poincaré, represented in England by Ambassador Jules Cambon, had easily eclipsed that of the Germans, just as Paléologue in St. Petersburg had relegated the German Pourtalès to the role of a helpless onlooker. Cambon was adept at stoking the vacillating Grey's fears of the incubus of "Pan-Germanism," and he dared to stand up to Grey when Grey tried to treat him condescendingly. Patient, scheming, he was able to wheedle from Grey the critical promise that Britain would permit no German ships to enter the Channel. In contrast, Germany's Lichnowsky, a caricature of an old-fashioned dandy, was ineffective and uninspiring, more fit to take tea with the bevy of aging duchesses he and his wife cultivated than to present forcefully his country's policy to the British. Like his colleagues in Russia, he wound up

weeping at the outbreak of the war, while his wife wept in the arms of Mrs. Asquith.

At the critical cabinet meeting on August 2nd, the Liberal Lord Morley, the lord president, an opponent of war, had laid his cards on the table at the outset. “Winston, we’re going to beat you, you know,” he remarked amiably. Churchill merely smiled. He knew of Grey’s promise to Cambon, and he knew which way the wind was blowing. Then he asked, "What reply should Grey have given Paul Cambon, the ambassador of France, when he asked what England would do if the German fleet attacked French ships or ports in the English Channel?" One by one the ministers replied. Morley and his allies spoke with little force, while Asquith, Grey, and Haldane, the Lord Chancellor, made their arguments vigorously. One after another, the Liberal opponents of the war backed down, several offering to resign, while opportunists like the crafty David Lloyd George calculated the benefits of a reversal in their stand. By the morning of the 3rd, Morley had resigned, along with three other ministers. Lloyd George, having "drunk at that well of martial enthusiasm," in Churchill’s phrase, stayed. The cabinet opted for war, but not in high spirits. The House of Commons remained to be convinced.

Grey’s speech before Commons on August 3rd was a masterpiece of dissimulation. Feigning ignorance of the details of the treaty joining France to Russia, he concentrated on the alleged threat to Britain posed by German ships streaming into the English Channel. He told the House:

> My personal point of view is this: the French fleet is in the Mediterranean. The coasts of northern France are absolutely without protection. We can not stand aside with our arms folded if a foreign fleet comes to bombard these unprotected shores.

He then informed the Commons of his fait accompli of the day before: the promise to Cambon. According to Malcolm Thomson, "No one breathed a word. If anyone in that vast audience listening to Sir Edward took exception to this moral blackmail, he kept silent."

Only Ramsay MacDonald, head of the Labour Party, future prime minister, raised a doubt. "We’d offer him our lives if the country were in danger. But he didn’t persuade me that it is." The session adjourned, with Great Britain on the brink. In a few hours, there would be a new lure for wavering ministers and M.P.s.

Chapter 17

“The Most Colossal Folly . . . ”

The advance of German troops across Belgian territory would furnish Liberal turncoats like Lloyd George with an occasion for pious indignation that was typical of the British Establishment. Britain’s leaders well knew that Germany’s only possible strategy against France necessitated the violation of Belgium’s neutrality. Great Britain was no stranger to the use of force and the abrogation of treaties to advance the aim of its elite, everywhere from Ireland to Hong Kong. France had violated or laid plans to violate Belgium’s sovereignty twenty times throughout her history. The man most concerned, Belgium’s King Albert I, would lash Poincaré after the war in these words: "I am most fond of Mr. Poincaré, who continues to talk as though all the overweening ambition and evil were on one side, whereas just a few days ago he stated that it was only because of his ‘veto’ that the French general staff had not invaded Belgium in 1914, and that he deeply regretted it!" In fact, Germany saw herself hemmed in between two giants about to crush her. The Manchester Guardian had enough courage to write on August 3, 1914: "We shall pass no harsh judgments on what a man or a nation does when it’s a matter of life or death."

However imprudent Kaiser Wilhelm II had been in his choice of words, he had done everything in his power to avert a war, while Churchill and his allies strove ceaselessly to bring on a bloody conflict that would leave Europe prostrate. At their behest, on the evening of August 3rd, at seven p.m., Britain’s ambassador, Sir Edward Goschen, presented himself at Bethmann-Hollweg’s office in Berlin and demanded that Germany respect Belgian neutrality by retreating from the country, on pain of war with Great Britain. The next morning in London Lichnowsky received his passport and the United Kingdom’s declaration of war at one and the same time. The document stated that the German Empire had declared war on Great Britain, a complete misstatement of the truth, which brought a hurried substitution of the corrected document for the inaccurate one by a secretary from the Foreign Office.

On the 4th the Manchester Guardian ran a full-page appeal by the League for

Neutrality on the theme: "Englishmen, do your duty and keep your country out of an evil and stupid war." Mrs. Asquith noted that "Winston Churchill was looking very happy." General Sir Henry Wilson predicted, "In four weeks we'll be at Elsenborn." "Three weeks," retorted the French general Berthelot. Other predictions were being made by more perceptive minds. Josiah Wedgwood prophesied, "You will see something much more important than a European war. You will see a revolution." Before the Russian Duma, an obscure delegate named Kerensky cried, "After you have defended your country, you will liberate it." In the far north of Siberia, on the banks of the Yenisei, a convict laid traps for foxes and field mice in the snow. Unknown to anyone in the West, he echoed the sentiments of the leftists in the Duma: "The tsar's war will be the proletariat's good fortune." His name, among revolutionaries, was Josef Stalin. The men who would lead the "October Revolution" had left Russia and were living abroad, watching and waiting. Lev Davidovich Bronstein, alias Trotsky, was living in Vienna. Warned by the Austrian Socialist Viktor Adler that he would be interned the next day, he fled to Switzerland on August 3rd. He would soon be joined by Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, alias Lenin, at that time holed up in Austrian Poland. Lenin would spend most of the war living across from a sausage factory in Zurich. From there he would set out in March 1917 towards world revolution and history.

The vast majority of Europeans gave little thought to the possibility of political and social cataclysm triggered by the war. The masses marched off to massacre with patriotism in their heads and savagery in their hearts. Years after the carnage, most of them would he no wiser. As the eminent French Senator d'Estournelles would exclaim before the International Court at The Hague in 1921, "Our public opinion has been so saturated with official lies that people can't wake up to the light and see the truth all at once. They wouldn't believe it!" As early as October 1916, Woodrow Wilson would write, "The singularity of the present war resides in the fact that its origin and its objectives have never been revealed. History will have to search a long time to explain this conflict" (Bullitt, President Wilson, p. 280) But Wilson, too, would lead his countrymen lemming-like into the carnage.

Naturally the victors had little desire to see the web of subterranean maneuvers, and the brazen lies which they had told in order to lead their peoples into war exposed. Nor did they wish to see overturned the harsh peace they imposed on the defeated, lest they be denied the billions of marks in reparations they had planned to exact. "If the Germans are proved innocent," asked Poincaré, "why should they want to pay war damages?" Yet not long after the war a growing consensus of honest scholars, from the victorious nations as well as the vanquished, would give the lie to the claims of Germany's exclusive guilt, which had been incorporated into the Versailles Treaty, as well as to the pretense of French, British, and Russian innocence. On his own country the French historian Fabre Luce would pronounce the verdict, "France isolated herself in a lie."

On August 4, 1914, the actors were all arrayed on the stage of Europe, the

just mingled with the unjust, the artless with the false. First the tsar, hanging his head, glassy eyed, and bedecked with ribbons-he was not responsible for much; he was merely the front man of Pan-Slav firebrands: the grand dukes, the Sazonovs, and a whole ruck of certified scoundrels like lzvolsky and Hartwig. Beside the Russian monarch, the oft grumpy tsaritsa in her wimple, the fine-looking grown daughters afflicted with hysteria, and a hemophiliac child, all of whom, buffeted by misfortune, would, in 1918, pay for the Russo-Serbian trap of June 28, 1914 by being horribly massacred by a Bolshevik murder squad.

Opposite, in his plumed eagle-helmet, was Wilhelm II, who had been more relentless than anyone in his efforts to prevent war. He would be tossed onto the scrap heap of history as a scapegoat, as a leper to be stoned and charged with the crimes of the real instigators.

In the background, artfully blurred by fog, the last one to arrive was Britain's George V, who lacked nerve, standing beside Churchill, who had it to burn, and who was scenting battle as if preparing to enjoy a savory and sumptuous repast. The massive Pashich, ever cautious, was hiding the revolver of Sarajevo under his dirty beard.

One lone Frenchman, the most brilliant of Frenchmen, the future Marshal Lyautey, had started back, horrified at seeing the ghastly spectacle about to begin.

"They are completely insane," he had exclaimed on receiving the order from Paris to be ready for full-scale action. "A war between Europeans is a civil war. It is the most colossal folly the civilized world has ever committed!"

The vicious treaty of Versailles imposed on Germany would finally bring to the chancellorship of that nation, on January 30, 1933, a volunteer infantryman of 1914. It would raise him to power and bring on the sequel. That sequel would be the Second World War, the accursed and ineluctable fruit of the First World War.

But before everything else there had been the two revolver shots of Sarajevo. They destroyed forever an entire world.

Part II

The False "War of Right"

Chapter 18

The Road to France

On the fourth of August, 1914, several German uhlans, black and white pennants fluttering at the tips of their lances, crossed into Belgian territory. Their passage did not go unnoticed. In a nearby thicket, a Belgian lookout hastily scrawled a few words on a leaf from his notebook and then fastened his message to the leg of a carrier pigeon. The bird took wing, circled the thicket once, and then made for Liège. The First World War was under way. The rival camps were secure in the belief they had anticipated everything to perfection. Absolutely nothing, however, would transpire as it had been set down in the meticulous plans of the general staffs. The French would not take Berlin, nor would the Russians. The Germans would be denied Paris. Although each side lunged at its opponent, sure of victory within two months, two months later the Russians would be reeling beaten from East Prussia, and the Germans and French would be digging the trenches in which they would be buried for four years, amidst a sea of mud and tens of thousands of rotting cadavers. From time to time either side would mount an offensive, squandering hundreds of thousands of lives on both sides, but the thrust would peter out after a few kilometers. By November 1 the Russians, who had brought along their dress uniforms for the triumphal parade through Berlin, would have lost half their men. Their artillery would be out of ammunition and much of their infantry armed with clubs instead of rifles. Three years later, the austere, aristocratic face of their ruler, the tsar, would be replaced by the non-Russian features of Vladimir Lenin. With the tsar would go the old order of Christian Russia, submerged beneath a tidal wave of red flags. Before Sarajevo the Russian minister of war had smugly predicted, "A nice little war would spare us a revolution." In the end, it would be Lenin and his Bolshevik henchmen who would spare the grand dukes their estates, the financiers their profits, and the Russian people their freedoms. In Central Europe an identical revolution would come close to succeeding. France would barely escape it at the time of the mutinies of 1917. Germany would bear the brunt of the Red thrust during the winter of 1918-1919, on the heels of her defeat. The heart of Europe was on the brink of sovietization in those dark

days, even as the victorious opportunists of Versailles carved away at it.

Scarcely a man in Europe would have dreamed of such an outcome on that sultry fourth of August, 1914, as the homing pigeon winged off from the thicket, gray-golden in the gleaming dawn, while the pennants of the invaders fluttered over the yellowing wheat field in the last moments of peace. Germany, as she marched westward, deployed a powerful, well-oiled military machine. The German strategy had been mapped out, in all its particulars, with meticulous exactitude. The German army would cut a long, straight furrow across Belgium, then swing down to the south between the Escaut and the Meuse, heading for the Marne and Paris. The advance had been timed beforehand as precisely as the stages of the "Tour de France" bicycle race. In thirty days, the Germans would enter Paris and the Kaiser would sleep in the palace at Versailles, while a million or two prisoners would slowly make their way in orderly ranks toward the receiving camps across the Rhine. The German armies were no stronger than those of France and Britain opposing them. The myth of German military superiority on the Western Front was laid to rest by General Mordacq, the former chief secretary of Georges Clemenceau, in his book Légendes de la Grand Guerre. The respective strengths in August 1914 were as follows: 78 French infantry divisions as opposed to 76 German; 4,582 French artillery pieces to 4,529 German guns; 2,260 French machine guns against 1,900 German. In manpower and materiel, neither side possessed a decisive advantage.

The eastward advance of the French armies had glittered as flamboyantly as the sun of those harvest weeks. At that time I was a small boy, eight years old, and I can still see the Bretons, the Parisians, the men of Provence marching up the road from France. The road ran through the outskirts of my little Belgian home town, Bouillon, along the Semois River, and the wooded valleys echoed to the cadence marked by the drummers marching eight abreast. One after another the units halted along the banks of the Semois and set up camp under the plum trees. For two weeks it was like a festival, as the cooks prepared french fries without stint and the songs of Botrel, the great French bard in those days, resounded on pianos brought from the houses of the townspeople. Soldiers and civilians strolled under the hornbeam trees along the river or danced the farandole, devoid of cares.

Occasionally an officer would inquire about the mysterious forests stretching east beyond our little valley. Despite the fact that for years France's leaders had schemed with the tsarist government of Russia to start a war against the Germans, its army had no road maps. We children were given the task of tearing the maps from piles of railroad-schedule books, to which we applied ourselves conscientiously. But of what use would they really be? No trains crossed our region and the maps indicated only the railroad lines, not the roads; our region was represented only by a completely blank space. We did little traveling in those days. The hill that bounded our valley to the east was called the Point du Jour (Daybreak). There our world began. The hill that closed the valley on the west was named Le Terme (The End). There Our world ended. Beyond was the unknown, the blank space on the map. But it was there that the tens

of thousands of French soldiers who had been occupying our district since the beginning of August would have to march to meet the Germans. But no one gave a thought to the morrow; they sang, and bathed in the river; it was a splendid vacation for the French troops. There were two or three little alarms. On several occasions a few uhlans were seen coming down through the thousands of oak trees toward our little town. They quickly disappeared. They must have had maps showing more than blank spaces, because they used forest trails that were hardly known even to our woodcutters. Germans stalking around, their pointed helmets sticking through the branches, had to cause concern. Why did they venture so far from their own country? The broad expanse of the Belgian Ardennes and the entire Grand Duchy of Luxembourg lay between Germany and us. Here they were on our doorstep. Why didn't our Frenchmen go meet them? What was war anyhow?

On August 15, 1914, we were witness to a great spectacle. A German airplane had come to bomb the French troops camped in our little town. We all rushed pellmell to a big tunnel carved in solid rock under the enormous medieval castle where nearly a thousand years ago Godefroy de Bouillon, the leader of the First Crusade, had lived. Wide-eyed, we watched the aerial bombardment from the entryway. A fantastic sight-stones were falling from the sky and ricocheting off the big blue paving-stones! Happy times those, when a man was content to throw good honest stones at his terrified enemy. The plot thickened. A French airplane appeared, one of the 140 France Possessed in 1914. I witnessed the first aerial combat of my life. The German began firing a short cavalry rifle, as did the Frenchman. They turned and flew at each other again, firing their weapons, then swiftly turning round again. At last the rifle fire ceased, ammunition expended, neither side having inflicted any damage. The two heroes disappeared over the horizon. We streamed back out of the tunnel proud to have witnessed so memorable an event. Eleven days after the start of the war, things were unchanged. No Belgian newspapers had reached Bouillon since August 4. A few French officers had newspapers from their country, however, and they summarized the news for us. The Germans, the Intransigeant of August 14 explained, were surrendering to anyone who gave them a slice of bread and butter. Their cartridges and their shells were worthless, never killed anybody. The Russian Cossacks were only five days' march from Berlin, according to Le Matin. The Germans were collapsing everywhere. The crown prince had committed suicide. Forty thousand Prussians had been taken prisoner at Liège alone. Would the war consist entirely of eating heaps of french fried potatoes? Everyone seemed to think so in our little valley.

Those first carefree weeks did not much square with the morale that had stirred the French people for four years before the war, the martially thrilling legend of Alsace-Lorraine. Since 1870 their political leaders had extolled offensive war, the "moment divine" of M. Poincaré. Then came two weeks of peaceful vacationing. The French officers en route to Berlin were not sending out reconnaissance patrols; not once in fifteen days did they conduct a single drill to keep the troops on their mettle. Since those days I have taken part in major battles in

Soviet Russia between 1941 and 1945, and I have commanded important units. I still take my head in my hands whenever I think of that war of my childhood, in 1914, in which the future combatants were content to watch the war as if gazing at trout streaming by from atop an old bridge. To have wanted the war so much, to have it within reach from the beginning of August 1914, and then to sit crammed in a valley lost in the depths of a great forest for two weeks! What were they waiting for? On August 20, 1914, the great call to battle finally sounded. Suddenly the bugles were calling the units to form and move out. The Fourth German Army, under the command of the Duke of Wurttemberg, had crossed the entire Ardennes, advancing to within twenty kilometers of our dark valley. Loaded down with enormous packs, our nice vacation friends - fifteen thousand to twenty thousand of them - marched off gaily to do battle in our mountains, officers in the lead, armed with our useless railroad maps. For a few hours our little town of Bouillon seemed strangely deserted and silent. Everyone watched the sky to the east. That was where the Prussians had to be. That afternoon, the heavy sounds of artillery fire began to rumble across the distant sky, like thunderheads rolling in. It was not until the following dawn that we saw the first carts coming down fromood Ardennes followed. Wounded harvest wagons driven by g d d Frenchsoldiers, closely packed together, lay on the rough planks. Some of them, for lack of bandages, had plastered dirt on their wounds to stop the bleeding. Such was the ambulance corps of an army that had been preparing for an offensive war for forty years. There wasn't even a field tent to shelter the casualties. The blood-stained survivors were unloaded in the old municipal poorhouse, where there was nothing available except our mothers' shredded linen. By nightfall several thousand men had been crammed into the building. The wounded less severely told how the enemy had cut them to pieces. The morning before, they had arrived utterly exhausted at a village named Maisin. The Germans were waiting for them, lying hidden right at the edge of the oak groves, sighting down their machine guns. The French troops had charged in their red trousers across the neighboring fields, the little fields of our poor countrymen, surrounded by tight barbed-wire walking wounded told how the enemy had cut them to pieces. The morning before, they had arrived utterly exhausted at a village dead would be buried in a common grave. Throughout the length of the Ardennes, one the border of France, it had been the same. The well-known writer, Henry Psichari, had fallen in one of our woods, near Rossignol, sword in hand, a rosary fastened to the hilt. Many bodies of wounded men who had dragged themselves under the thick foliage before dying would, years afterward, be found under the deep forest oaks. The French retreat was just as disorderly as the botched combat. Late on the night of August 23, 1914 there came a loud knocking on our door. I ran to my mother, who opened an upstairs window. Soldiers were stretched out on the bare ground, clear to the end of the street, as if they were dead. A voice rang out-I can still hear it-almost beseeching, the voice of a young officer. "The road to France, Madame!" Neither he, nor his soldiers, knew the road back to France. No maps. No reconnaissance. Nonexistent communications. Surrender. Fear. That was France in August 1914. A charming, carefree, terribly chauvinistic people that,

thanks to an astounding lack of preparation, was brought to a frightful state of emasculation. In one month, at the height of harvest time, seven hundred thousand Frenchmen would fall, dead or wounded.

Then a last-minute miracle-for it was a miracle-came: the reversal of the Marne. The battle was impromptu and makeshift, despite the careful planning of the General Staff in Berlin. It would save Paris, from which IV Poincaré, his government, and five thousand Parisians had already fled i panic. The retreat had been general on all fronts. On the Lorraine front, launched by Joffre on August 8, 1914 in application of plan XVII, the French troops had thought themselves masters of Mulhouse, but the German Seventh Army, hidden in the forest of the Hardt, had trapped them. Almost surrounded, the French had no choice but to beat a retreat with all possible speed. In the Saar and to the north of Verdun, the French suffered an identical defeat. Joffre, the French commander-in-chief, had made a serious mistake. He had underestimated German strength on the western front by a third. Since the French had possessed the detailed plan of the enemy high command, the Schlieffen plan, for eight years, Joffre had no excuse. He hadn't fortified the Franco-Belgian frontier to the northwest, between the Meuse and the North Sea, where-as was set down in black and white-the German army planned to storm through in the event of war. In complete contrast, the efforts of the French armies had been directed primarily towards the eastern front, where the Prussian plan projected no breakthrough. The obsession with Alsace-Lorraine not only addled the thinking of Poincaré and the warmongers in his entourage, it also befuddled the high command. Unprepared, poorly commanded, and inactive for fifteen days while the enemy hemmed them in on all sides, the French armies not onl: suffered a terrible blow in the Ardennes, but at the same time were cut to pieces in a second theater, between the Meuse and the North Sea, in the great battle of Mons-Charleroi.

General Lanrezac, a native of Guadeloupe, who commanded the Sixti Army at Mons, showed himself a poor tactician, although he had been professor of tactics at the War Academy. He failed completely to understand the tactics of General von Kluck, th(commander of the German First Army, who should have been an oper book to him, as to Joffre, for the preceding eight years. The Germans hac rushed straight at Brussels, capturing the Belgian capital on August 14. The Schlieffen plan then called for a great sweep to the south in the direction 0! Paris. Clearly, the Germans would pass to the north of Mons. The German Second Army, that of General von Bülow, attacked a Namur and Charleroi on the same day. Lanrezac knew the enemy's route it advance, and he must surely have been aware that he risked being caugh between von Kluck and von Bülow if he did not extend his formation to the left. Yet there he was, on August 15, marching up from Phillippeville anc Marienbourg towards the Sambre river and taking position there as if the German Second Army were the only one in existence. When the battle began on August 21, von Kluck was able to attack in an area virtually unprotected by Lanrezac, on his left wing, where he was supported by no more than four British divisions. By the next day von Kluck's army had punched through to occupy Mons. A little later Lanrezac was outflanked at

the outermost point of his right wing, this time by von Hausen's Second Army, which had leap-frogged across the Meuse. A few hours later Lanrezac found himself virtually surrounded at Mezières. He ordered a desperate retreat. Disaster was at hand. "The fear instilled in me during the preceding days as to the offensive capability of our troops in the field were yesterday confirmed," General Joffre wrote to Poincaré. He didn't hide the reasons. "We have no choice but to accept the evidence; our army corps, despite their numerical superiority, did not show the hoped-for offensive qualities in the field." General Joffre, at small cost, was clearing his own name at the expense of his soldiers. Lanrezac had not had the advantage of superior numbers at Charleroi. Joffre had miscalculated the enemy's long foreseeable movement of three German armies (von Kluck, von Bülow, and von Hausen) against Lanrezac, instead of just one. Moltke had arrayed thirty German divisions against fourteen French divisions, four British and one Belgian (at Namur). As we have seen, the Germans and the French disposed approximately equal forces on the western front. The essential was that they be deployed judiciously. Here, the error of the French command was monumental. That was not the only explanation, however. In the battle of the Belgian Ardennes, the French forces had enjoyed a numerical advantage (160 French battalions against 122 German battalions), and they had nonetheless been routed there, as elsewhere, and almost annihilated. "Ineptitude of the commanders in handling their units. Lack of troop training, absence of coordination between units moving in parallel. These among many findings boded ill for the future of the French army." That was the verdict of historian Marc Ferro (La Grande Guerre, p. 96).

Thus it was on August 24, 1914 more than a hundred thousand redtrousered corpses lay in the woods and amid the newly harvested crops of the Ardennes and the area between the Sambre and the Meuse. The survivors were taking to their heels. "The road to France, Madam." As a million French soldiers were fleeing toward France, four German armies swooped southward: the first through Valenciennes, the second through Maubeuge, the third through Rethel, and the fourth through Sedan. They were supported on their left wing by the Fifth Army, which under the command of the crown prince, was racing forward via Luxemburg and Longwy. In less than a week the Oise and the Aisne had been crossed, and the German First, Second, and Third Armies were across the Marne. Von Kluck was only an hour away from a nearly deserted Paris, which he disregarded, striking toward the southwest to join up with the Fifth and Seventh Armies of Crown Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria and General von Heeringen, which were coming down from the Saar and from Alsace in the direction of the Seine. "In five weeks this whole business will be finished," von Moltke declared at the end of August. Yet six weeks later it was he who would be finished, dismissed from his post and morally shattered. The German armies, after a headlong retreat, would hastily dig hundreds of kilometers of trenches from Nieuport to Verdun, endless cadaver pits in which they would stagnate for four years. Why all of a sudden, when there seemed nothing left of the Gallic cock but a few feathers, was the German, eagle exulting in its victories, checked at its zenith

and then pushed back?

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The battle of the Marne, strange as it may seem, was not won at the Marne, but two thousand kilometers to the east, on the outskirts of a little German town named Tannenberg, in East Prussia. There the Russians suffered a bitter reverse. But at the same time that the Germans defeated the tsar, they defeated themselves. Without Tannenberg, there would have been no defeat on the Marne. First the dates: German victory at Charleroi, August 22-23, 1914; German victory at Tannenberg, August 26-29, 1914. In the intervening three days General von Moltke would commit the fatal error that made possible the French victory on the Marne ten days afterwards. The entire German strategy rested, as we have seen, on the elimination of the adversary in the west before facing the Russian foe in the east. A two- front war seemed unthinkable for Germany. France's army was equal in numbers to Germany's, and the tsar had mobilized five million soldiers, a figure that could be increased to ten million. The political and diplomatic strategy of France's Third Republic for a quarter of a century had consisted precisely of entoiling Germany in the dilemma of fighting two great wars simultaneously-which would almost certainly mean losing them both simultaneously. A Germany forced to dispatch half of her forces to her eastern border should be defeated in the west by the French, who had been excellent soldiers for centuries. She was virtually condemned to defeat if she faced the French armies outnumbered two to one. Even if Germany could sustain a two-front war a rapid solution on either front would be impossible. A long war would require raw materials which Germany did not possess, whereas the French and the Russians did have or could import them. The German high command, increasingly uneasy at the burgeoning military strength of the Russians, and the growth of their strategic network of railroads, thanks to French loans, in the direction of Prussia, had come to the conviction that it was imperative that Germany fight only one war at a time.

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The Russians first? Or the French first? It could not be the Russians first, because the Germans would scarcely have penetrated the vast expanses of Russia - ten thousand kilometers between the Baltic and the Pacific Ocean - before the French deployed their forces against a Rhine only half defended. The French mobilization, facilitated by an exceptionally dense railway network, would be completed, according to the general staff, in seventeen days. Immediately thereafter, opposed by a greatly reduced German army, the French, without much difficulty, might even be able to reach the imperial palace in Berlin, as Poincaré hoped, "by All Saints' Day." To von Moltke, allowing such an avalanche to sweep down on the German Reich would be suicidal. Should the Eastern Front be initially ignored? Should Germany act only in the west, and not oppose the advance of the Russians until mid- September 1914? Leave German soil undefended against the Russian invasion except with a simple screen of a few divisions during the six or seven critical weeks? It would be necessary to break

through and destroy the French front in a matter of weeks. It meant taking a terrible risk. The only factors on which Germany could reasonably count to offset the danger were the immensity of Russia's territory, her still inadequate railway network, and her miserable roads. To transport several million men over thousands of kilometers, together with their gear and enormous quantities of war materiel, especially artillery, would take Russia a month or more. By the time the Russian enemy was finally ready, the German army, it was hoped, would have crushed the French and could then be transferred in force to East Prussia, or at least to the Oder river. It was with this scenario in mind that General Schlieffen, chief of staff of the German high command, had prepared his famous plan, which, unknown to anyone in Berlin, had come into the possession of the French Army in 1906, thanks to a traitor bought for sixty thousand francs. France's leaders therefore knew the strategic implications of it exactly. Fortunately for the Germans, this plan hadn't much concerned the French command. Perhaps they hadn't believed it. The plan was relegated by the French to a file of dusty old records. History is filled with such missed opportunities. It would happen again in the Second World War: the French, Belgians, and Dutch, informed in advance of the German offensive of May 10, 1940 by an anti-Hitler general and by the Dutch embassy in Berlin, would take no heed of the warning, Stalin, told of the imminent German attack of June 22, 1941 well ahead of time by Churchill, immediately before by two deserters, would take no account of the warnings. Hitler, in turn, would fail to act on important, detailed information furnished by the Turkish spy, "Cicero," concerning the future Allied landings in France in 1944, information that Churchill had passed to Stalin via the British embassy in Ankara. Human intelligence often stumbles in the night imposed by its blindness.

The lethargy of the French almost certainly freed von Moltke from a grave risk in August of 1914. There was another problem, however: the necessity, which seemed to him inescapable, of crossing Belgium to get to Paris. The historical reality has been that ill-fated Belgium has never been respected by anyone. The leaders of the French Revolution and NapoLéon attached no more importance to her than to one of their assignats. General Joffre himself had stated that a war against Germany was inconceivable unless the French armies made a dash through the Belgian corridor. In 1940 it would be the same with Gamelin. In a way, Belgium forms an unavoidable passage. For two thousand years the Belgians have been walked over by Caesar's Romans, the Celts and the Germans, the Normans, Spaniards, Austrians, the French, the Dutch, Wellington's British, the Prussians of Blucher, the Cossacks of Alexander I. Belgium is the warrior's gangplank. In August 1914, the Belgian gangplank was being crossed once again. Each time, Belgium's invaders had produced good excuses. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, at the beginning of August 1914, was concerned enough about Belgium's plight to announce to the Reichstag on the first day of the invasion that Germany would make good any damage done. Which didn't in the slightest prevent the British and the French-who had done the same thing themselves a number of times-from tearing their hair in hypocritical indignation.

The Germans had a stern choice: either to ignore the rights of the Belgians, or to blunt their offensive against the French and lose the war. In scales weighted with the destinies of such mighty nations, the Belgians didn't count for very much. By invading Belgium so cavalierly (uhlans in the vanguard), the Germans gave the Allies occasion to raise a great din of propaganda. At the same time they allowed the British imperialists to assign themselves the virtuous and almost unheard-of role of defender of the oppressed. The only way the Germans could extricate themselves from the political consequences was by a quick victory. At the end of August 1914, everything led them to believe they would succeed. The French had been in flight for a week. According to von Moltke's schedule, he would be victorious as early as mid-September; then he would be able to transfer his forces to Potsdam or Königsberg and administer the final blow to the Russians.

However hazardous this double plan was, it could have been realized if the Russians had not begun to organize weeks in advance with a pre- mobilization and if von Moltke had proved himself equal to the task at the moment of great decision. The bold stroke of the Germans in the west could only succeed if the French could be conquered within thirty-five days. By August 24, 1914 that victory was in sight. The French armies had been beaten everywhere in less than three weeks. In the west, therefore, the German strategy and tactics were winning. In the east, on the other hand, and at nearly the same time, expectations seemed to be unraveling. The Russians had been astute. Their leaders knew, even better than the German general staff, the shortcomings of their mobilization plan and the slowness imposed by the distances involved. They had also tried to shorten the delays by resorting in great secrecy, as we have disclosed, to partial mobilizations in advance. When the Russo-German war began in earnest they had anticipated the Reich's generals by several weeks. The Russian generals had brought their Siberian troops to the West twenty-four days earlier. Moreover the Pan-Slavic clique had been hounded every day by Poincaré, who wished to see their armies in combat even before he had engaged his own troops in the Ardennes and at Charleroi. He complained of a lack of collaboration by the tsar regarding a single day's delay: "The Russian offensive which was announced for this evening (August 13, 1914), and which was to contribute to the relief of our front, was unfortunately postponed until tomorrow or till Sunday morning." (Poincaré, L'Invasion, p. 89). The French president sent all possible intermediaries to the rescue. "Sir George Buchanan was charged with pointing out to Sazonov that it was of the utmost urgency to support us in the fight against Germany, with M. Doumergue and our general staff stressing the same point of view." Because of such nagging insistence, and although they had concentrated only a part of their troops at the border, on August 14, 1914 the Russians entered German territory two or three weeks in advance of their schedule. By the next day, August 15, the Russian armies were already advancing deep into East Prussia. On August 20, 1914, they trounced the meager forces of German General Prittwitz at Gumbinnen.

The situation was serious for Germany, because the German troops in the East

were very few in number. They constituted only a fragile screen, nine divisions in all, scarcely a tenth of the German divisions that, on that same day, confronted the French in Belgium. The Russians opposing them, even though not at full effective strength, were three times their number: twenty-nine divisions. Even so, their superiority over the nine German divisions was questionable. They had been thrown into action too hastily; they were poorly equipped; their commanders were far from military geniuses. That would soon be apparent; a week later, Hindenburg and Ludendorff would annihilate them. Whatever the uncertainty of the moment after the defeat at Gumbinnen, it was essential that von Moltke remain calm and hold more than ever to the Schlieffen plan, which required meticulous execution. Even if the Russians reached the Oder, even if they conquered Berlin, only one consideration was uppermost in the plan: eliminating, by using a maximum of force, the French obstacle in the west. Then, and only then, were they to turn back on the Russians, however far they had come, whether Magdeburg or Munich. In war, the important thing isn't avoiding retreat; the goal is to win the final battle, even at the cost of temporarily giving up a vast amount of terrain, or risking extreme peril. Strategically, space is not a taboo, but a tool. For Moltke not to be alarmed at the news of the premature Russian offensive, he needed to have nerves of steel. He didn't have them. Unlike General Joffre, his French counterpart, he was not a commander who remained unmoved when the tornado strikes. In circumstances so extraordinarily difficult, involving two enormous fronts two thousand kilometers apart, William II should never have entrusted such crushing responsibilities to an amiable and philosophical esthete who had the shoulders of a solid and invincible Prussian officer, but was hesitant, fumbling, and filled with fears. When von Moltke received the unpleasant news on August 20, 1914 of the Russo-German battle of Gumbinnen-which was actually more of a skirmish than a great battle-he was completely unnerved. Although he had the victories of Mons, Charleroi, the Ardennes, and Champagne well in hand, he imagined Germany's situation a desperate one. Panicked, on August 25, 1914 he took a totally inappropriate step: he withdrew two army corps, the Eleventh and the Reserve Corps of the Guard, from the wing of his armies advancing on Paris. His colleagues warned him of the danger, because the two army corps

The Rwere absolutely indispensable if the French army, in full retreat, was to be annihilated. It would be noted instantly in the enemy camp. "It is a grave decision and a gross error; the German commander-in-chief is weakening the very armies he's asking to make the decisive effort." (Renouvin, La Crise européenne, p. 244). General von Moltke had already committed a grievous error eight days earlier when he sent six reserve divisions to Lorraine. At that time he should have put them in action in support of his offensive forces in order to carry the decision. In Lorraine he had no real need of them: the Fifth and Sixth Armies had easily wiped out the French attempts to advance and quickly turned them into a retreat. The second error was catastrophic. The battle of Mons-Charleroi ended on August 23, 1914. The Germans were in position to finish off the French in two or three weeks. At the very important moment when

it was imperative to strike the final blow, von Moltke snatched 150,000 soldiers from his offensive against Paris and sent them off in three hundred trains in the direction of the Vistula on August 26, 1914.

Without Gumbinnen, there would never have been a French victory of the Marne. Quite possibly, but the astounding fact is that the diversion of those two army corps served no purpose whatsoever. At the hour when the three hundred trains departed, the Russians were being utterly destroyed. The dates are startling. On August 26 Moltke gave the order for the two army corps to depart for the east; on the following day, August 27, more than a thousand kilometers from the railway platforms of Belgium, the battle between the Russians and Germans at Tannenberg took place. And what a battle! In three days, Hindenburg and Lundendorff totally annihilated the Russian army of Samsonov, which was three times larger than their own forces. It was a total rout: tens of thousands of Russian soldiers were killed, 92,000 taken prisoner, 350 cannon captured. Samsonov, the Russian commander-in-chief, was so crushed militarily and in spirit that he committed suicide.

Thus not a single one of the 150,000 German soldiers redirected by von Moltke from the offensive in France to east Prussia took part at Tannenberg. On that fateful day their 300 trains were still chugging through the Belgian province of Hainaut. Their absence would be fateful when the First and Second Armies, weakened by that enormous levy, would hold the fate of the war in their hands a few days later southeast of Paris.

Chapter 19

Feet of Clay

General von Bülow (a member of an extraordinary family of diplomats and military men: more than one hundred Billows would take part in the war, and seventy percent of them would be killed or wounded) and General von Kluck continued to pursue the fleeing French at full speed. However, von Kluck, suddenly stripped of 150,000 elite troops, had to rein in his right flank, which would have swept to Pontoise, to the west of Paris, between the French capital and the Atlantic. He pulled back towards Meaux, to the east of Paris, where it was still entirely possible that, once across the Marne, he might link up with the German Sixth and Seventh Armies to General Joffre's rear.

The Germans advanced on all fronts for some days. Almost immediately after the German victory at Charleroi on August 26, the First British Army Corps was severely beaten at Le Cateau by von Kluck. On August 29, 1914, the defeated Lanrezac tried courageously to aid the fleeing British, but the latter demurred. They had suffered terrible losses: 100,000 men in one month. Now the British wanted only to return by forced marches to the ports of Dunkirk and Calais. An old habit: at Waterloo, when Wellington was in doubt as to whether he could repel NapoLéon's attack, he prepared for a retreat through the forest of Soignies, between the battlefield and Brussels, and had already sent relays ahead to the northwest in order to be able to reembark his army without too much disorder if the emperor won the day. Similarly the British commander, Marshal French, in the days of August 1914, felt a raging desire to cut and run. He was more drawn to London fogs than to spiked helmets. Ferro, the historian, tells us (La Grande Guerre, p. 104): "French wished to save what was left of his army; and, judging the French [marshals] incapable of pulling themselves together, he had thought of reembarking." It was with difficulty that Lanrezac coaxed the British troops back into the retreating columns.

Meanwhile, General von Kluck had reached Noyon. He was advancing on Ferté-Milon and on Compiègne. By August 31 he was very close to cornering the French armies southeast of Paris. He had passed the valley of the Ourcq and

reached Chateau-Thierry, pressing hard on the heels of the French, who crossed the bridges of the Marne before him, barely escaping him. In one week the armies of von Kluck and von Bülow had reached the heart of France, on foot, because troops at that time still had to rely on their legs to get any place while campaigning. Hundreds of thousands of German soldiers had taken the crossings of the Aisne and the Vesle at bayonet point beneath the hot August sun. They had come, as Corneille had once said, "to the verge of a total victory," just a few tens of kilometers from Paris. Their eyes sparkled with joy. In another week they would be able to close the trap in the rear of "the main body" of the French army. Von Moltke's order of the day of September 2, 1914 was for his troops to strike the knockout blow.

For three weeks the French public had learned next to nothing of the front. At the start of August 1914 the chatterboxes of the press, so convincing when it was a matter of getting their readers to underwrite the Russian loans, were bursting with wondrous details about the new super weapon: a slice of French bread and butter that, like a magnet, would draw the famished Huns to it as one man. The newspapers hushed up almost completely the disasters of the Ardennes and of Charleroi. On August 28 they finally revealed that the enemy's cavalry was at the Marne, then, the next day, that the French capital itself was threatened, and on that day Poincaré's government fled with its tail between its legs. That news started the headlong flight of a half-million Parisians, heading helter-skelter towards the south. Poincaré and his gang, absconding from the Elysée, took refuge in Bordeaux and didn't show their faces in Paris again until three months later, in November 1914, when the big scare was over.

The commander-in-chief of the French armies, General Joffre, was a man as calm as a locomotive sitting in a railroad station. He was so dull of eye one never knew whether he was awake or asleep. A massive man and a monument of serenity, he was a big eater and slept a great deal. Some said he was "an incompetent dullard." Whatever the case, he was unshakable, "constant in his faults," and proceeded slowly. Charles de Gaulle would write, "having badly engaged his sword, he knew he couldn't lose his balance." One more week of retreat, and the German First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Armies could easily join up behind his troops in Champagne. His meals did not suffer because of it, nor did his sleep; he was supremely calm, and without a single unnecessary word set up his chessmen again each time he was overwhelmed, putting his military pawns back in place. He vowed resolve even while retreating. From Joffre's directive of September 1, 1914: "The flanking movement carried out by the enemy on the left wing of the Fifth Army, and not sufficiently arrested by the British troops of the Sixth Army, makes it necessary for our entire formation to wheel around its right side." After the thunderclap of the two great defeats of August 24 and 25, Joffre drew from the less threatened sectors those elements which would permit reorganizing of the Fifth Army to new strength. He entrusted the reorganization to General Maunoury. His mission: stop the rout before Amiens by August 27. It was too late for that. The army was only able to re-assemble well into the rear of the town. Militarily, Paris was almost defenseless at the end of August

1914. The capital was only sketchily protected by worthy territorials, who were more liberally endowed with rheumatism than with military equipment. Its air defense was limited to a total of nine planes, three of them Voisins, and to two 75mm self-propelled howitzers. General Gallieni had been named commander of Paris by the fleeing politicians. In poor health (he would die two years later), he was a competent and clever officer, far superior to the placid Joffre, whom he treated, moreover, with a condescension that was rather irritating. But he was the man whom France needed that week. To calm the Parisians who hadn't fled, he had his brigade of grandpas march through the city ten or a dozen times. From near Amiens he drew seven regular divisions of the new army formed on August 27, which were reinforced on September 1 by two divisions from the Fourth Army Corps retreating from Sainte Menehould. In the end, he had fifteen divisions. The Germans continued their dash to the southeast of Paris, but now on their right flank fifteen French divisions under a bold and dynamic commander were watching for the false step that would enable an attack precisely where the enemy were missing the 150,000 men suddenly sent to the Eastern front.

Moltke's headquarters was far from the battle. That would prove to be another big mistake on his part. Instead of installing himself at Laon or at Soisson, or at least at Charleroi, from where he could follow the fighting from fairly close at hand, in an era when communication was still slow and unreliable, he set up his headquarters in Luxembourg, a few miles from Germany. His armies advanced some three hundred kilometers with impunity while he sat glued to his armchair in the old feudal town nestled beneath a somber castle. His messengers had to spend hours of travel on bad roads in cars that endangered the driver if he exceeded sixty kilometers per hour to reach the front. His remoteness from the action would be one of the major causes of the defeat von Moltke was to suffer a week later at the Marne, a river he would never see. Isolated, entirely dependent upon the belated reports of messengers, von Moltke sent back orders that reached the front line hours late, and dispatched delegations top-heavy with second-rate staffers. The latter, mandated by von Moltke to make immediate decisions in his name, had to be obeyed by the army generals who, right there on the scene, were better informed. They were thus not directly in command, which meant that they were not in command at all. Their commander was an aged Thor sitting on high in the clouds of Luxembourg, and he would not descend from his throne until he had been dismissed. Von Moltke wouldn't open his eyes to the danger until too late. Joffre had assembled troops of the First Army before Paris. Still retreating, in order to gain time, the French generalissimo added reinforcements from his armies in Lorraine, where the danger was less obvious.

Moltke would not be informed of the French reinforcement from Lorraine until September 4, 1914. It would be September 5 before he, too, decided to bring up two army corps from the Lorraine front to reinforce the German offensive, now at the end of its momentum. These two army corps, like those which were diverted to the Eastern front, would not serve any purpose either, spending

the decisive days traveling, forty to a car, in cattle cars. Von Moltke got no clear idea of the maneuver the French were preparing before Paris until a week later. Panicky Moltke finally discerned the threat: "It must be assumed that the enemy is assembling heavy forces in the region of Paris and bringing in new units in order to defend the capital and to threaten the German right flank." The German right flank was von Kluck's army. Following orders, he had advanced farther and farther to the south beyond the Marne, well in advance of the thrust of von Billow's Second Army. The objective was now almost within reach: "In conformity with the orders they had received on 4 September," writes the French historian Renouvin, "the German Fourth and Fifth Armies were trying to open a road to the south in order to join up with the armies of Lorraine that were trying to force the passage of the Moselle and the Meurthe. It was there the German command was seeking the decision." Von Kluck had deliberately shot ahead and was within an ace of victory. Twenty-four years later Rommel would do the same thing, but in each case the risk was great. Only one of von Kluck's army corps, the Fourth Reserve Corps, on the Ourcq, guarded his right flank which was threatened by Paris. Gallieni badgered Joffre. He pointed out the possibility of striking a slashing blow right at von Kluck's rear. He could count on his fifteen divisions, the British, and General Lanrezac's Fifth Army, now commanded by the future marshal, Franchet d'Esperey. The British had finally consented to back him up, without enthusiasm to be sure, and after anguished debate: Marshal French did not agree. He considered giving battle premature and preferred to continue the retreat, falling back behind the Marne; moreover, he was not ready to take part in a battle where he would have to engage all his forces at one time. Joffre, who wished to have done with it, decided to throw his sword into the balance and went to see French. With ill-concealed emotion he said: In the name of France, Marshal French, I ask you for your total assistance. This time, the honor of England is at stake." There was tension in the air. Joffre knew that Murray, French's assistant, was opposed to the counteroffensive. A heavy silence ensued. French replied almost inaudibly: "I will do all I can. (Ferro, La Grande Guerre, pp. 10f.) Joffre breathed a sigh of relief.

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The French divisions assembled for the counterattack now numbered twenty-eight. The Germans would be able to oppose them with only fourteen divisions in the Paris area. From one against one to two to one! An opportunity for a flanking maneuver such as is rarely offered in warfare had arisen. After long reflection and hesitation, Joffre made his decision on September 4. He was going to play his secret card. The French generalissimo's order of the day: "It behooves us to take advantage of the risky situation of the German First Army and concentrate the efforts of the Allied armies on the extreme left flank against it." Gallieni proposed attacking Meaux. During the entire day of September 5, he pressed his luck north of the Marne grappling with the flank-guard (the Fourth Reserve Corps) of von Kluck's army. The next day, September 6, the offensive began. For three days it would be a fight to the death.

France, indeed, was deciding whether she would live or die. Von Kluck defended

himself with firmness and valor. But in bringing his army corps to the north bank of the Marne, he drifted away from von Bülow, his neighbor. Across a gap of fifty kilometers they were linked only by a screen of cavalry. "The German generals," we read in Renouvin (La Crise européenne, p. 249), "didn't overlook that danger, rather counting on their offensive to protect them from it. By means of a vigorous attack on both extremities of the combat front they intended to seize victory before the breach was wide open. Kluck brought all his effort to bear on his right wing on the Ourcq plateaus, where he sought to outflank Maunoury's army from the north. Bülow hurled his left wing across the marshes of Saint-Gond against Foch's army. On the morning of the 9th, those attacks, despite the stubborn resistance of the French troops, still looked most promising." The Germans, an ancient people of disciplined soldiers admirably trained in defensive as well as offensive warfare, returned blow for blow despite their numerical inferiority. To relieve his right wing, von Moltke had sent the crown prince into action with all his forces. The kaiser's son had been on the point of capturing Verdun, which Joffre had already authorized Sarrail to evacuate. To the north of the Marne, Bülow was grappling, still victoriously, with Foch's attacks. "The battle," Ferro relates (La Grande Guerre, p. 101) "raged for several days, with the adversaries trying to maneuver on the wings. Threatened on his left side, Bülow had to call on the armies of the center: von Hausen drew nearer to him and assisted him in closing the breach. Farther off to the east, the French had gone on the offensive as well, but it was the Germans in the last analysis who led the operation." The withdrawal to the right bank of the Marne was accomplished by von Kluck in perfect order: "That same day, Maunoury narrowly escaped being overwhelmed by von Kluck, and Gallieni was forced to requisition the Parisian taxis in order to send him reinforcements without loss of time" (Ferro, ibid). That episode has become famous; it is the Epinal image of Gallieni. Seeing that the offensive was in danger of taking a bad turn, the quick- witted Gallieni rounded up every ramshackle conveyance in Paris, loaded in all the soldiers who were still left in the capital, and rushed them in the direction of the enemy. It was the first motorized expedition in history.

An unknown then entered on the scene. A mere lieutenant colonel, a German named Hentsch, his own authority, in comparison with that of the two army commanders, was non-existent. But as von Moltke's personal emissary h commander-in-chief.e had been empowered to issue orders in the field in the name of the Generals von Kluck and von Bülow, lacking direct instructions from their chief, were trying to coordinate their operations. Von Moltke should have been in a position to give the necessary orders at once. Ex-Chancellor Prince von Bülow wrote: Moltke should have allowed the three armies of the right wing to obtain their own information on the spot and thus assure strategic unity. Instead of taking that course, at the decisive moment, on 8 September, he sent a section commander from his staff, Lieutenant Colonel Hentsch, authorized him to make decisions, mentioned the possibility of a retreat in the last verbal instructions he gave him, and even added some indication of the

direction of a possible retreat. Of all the officers on his staff, Hentsch was the most susceptible to doubts, and it was for precisely that reason that he had the sympathy of his chief. Hentsch held the fate of the battle in his hands - and the fate of campaign, army, and country as well; and when he received an unfavorable impression of the situation in the headquarters of the Second Army, he recommended to Field Marshal General von Bülow, the commander of that army, that he retreat towards the northeast. Immediately afterwards he proceeded to General von Kluck, the commander of the First Army, and similarly urged him to pull back. (Memoirs, pp. 171f.) At that crucial moment, a mere lieutenant colonel who had just stepped from his liaison car was making the strategic and tactical decisions of the battle. Ferro (La Grande Guerre, p. 102) stated: "Lieutenant Colonel Hentsch, given complete authority by Moltke back at general headquarters in Luxembourg ordered von Kluck and von Bülow to carry out a general withdrawal." Renouvin, the French historian, after interviewing various German historians after the war, reported their conclusions: The German armies were on the point of victory. Even on the right wing they were very close to success. Kluck on the Ourcq and Bülow on the Saint- Gond marsh were in a position to smash the enemy and should have been given a few more hours: that would have been enough to change the outcome. The man responsible for the defeat was Lieutenant Colonel Hentsch, Moltke's deputy to the army commanders. He lacked the necessary firmness of character. When one last effort was all that was needed for victory he thought the troops beaten.

As with all victories and all defeats, discussion could go on forever. Excuses of misfortune change nothing. "Misfortune," said NapoLéon, "is the excuse of incompetents and blunderers." The French attack at the Marne was courageously conceived at a time when the situation was nearly desperate. Joffre, indifferent to adversity, and with remarkable imperturbability, issued his orders with sang-froid. Maunoury, during those days, lit up the battle of the Marne with his brilliance. Wars abound in the unforeseeable, but the excellence of the French command was a reality. The victory did not bring total salvation; the proof is that the war quickly bogged down on the Western Front for four years. The battle of the Marne saved France from a catastrophe which would probably have destroyed the military strength of the country for a long time to come. But France was spent and at the limit of her resources. It would take her four years to recover. The chief contribution to the salvation of France had been the pitiful leadership of von Moltke, the German commander-in-chief. He never went near the field of battle; his information was always late, as were his decisions, which were nearly always based on indirect information. So delicate were von Moltke's nerves that he was given to crying at moments when it was imperative he have nerves of steel. Prince von Wendel visited Moltke's general headquarters in Luxembourg during those crucial days. "When I was presented," the visitor recounted, "I was appalled at the appearance of the chief of the general staff, slumped down at his desk with his head in his hands. When Moltke raised his eyes, he showed me a pallid face wet with tears." "I am too heavyhearted," von Moltke confessed. William II, who was ignorant of military

realities and who never exercised his power as commander-in-chief of the army from 1914 to 1918, had made a poor choice in the commander of his troops. At the end of a month and a half he would find it necessary to replace Moltke. "He succumbed under the weight of his responsibilities," Prince von Bülow would later say. "At the crucial moment, the reins slipped from his weak hands. The staff and junior officers prevailed. The high command failed in its task." Bülow recalled an aphorism from the past: "More than two thousand years ago a Greek philosopher taught that an army of deer commanded by a lion was superior to an army of lions commanded by a deer." In August and September of 1914 Moltke had an army of lions at his disposal. Marshal Foch would say of it that "it was the best army the world had ever seen." But the commander of the lions had acted like a deer. Instead of keeping a stout heart, he had defeated himself. Could he have acted otherwise? The answer is yes. For a moment, he even thought of doing so. Then, weak-willed, he gave up, and on September 10, 1914 he ordered a general withdrawal. It was an unnecessary move, for the Allies had discontinued their offensive. "The French and the English," stated Prince von Bülow, "felt so little like victors that they did not harass the Germans as they retreated."

The French, like the Germans, were on their last legs. From the Meuse to the Marne they had left hundreds of thousands of men lying dead and wounded. Both armies were at the end of their strength. The French artillery had, in just a few weeks, expended half of its ammunition reserves. Ammunition was stingily supplied: not even five million shells on the first day of hostilities, although French guns would fire three hundred million in the next four years. Machine guns, the only effective weapon for fighting at close quarters in a war in which from the first day millions of men faced each other, were almost nonexistent. The French air force consisted of 160 planes. The pilots were still armed only with rifles-and almost never hit anything. Tanks had not yet been developed.

The only true weapon during those first five weeks of the war of 1914 (August 4 to September 10) would be human flesh: the French army, before the end of 1914, would see its casualties rise to 900,000 (300,000 killed). They would continue to grow. The final cost of the war to the countries involved would be eight million dead and thirty-two million wounded. Meanwhile, in mid-September 1914, the French army, after a successful counteroffensive lasting a few days, found itself winded and unable to exploit its brief advance. By September 17, 1914 it was over. The French pursuit had been halted at the Aisne. General de Castelneau, mustachioed old gentleman of strong Catholic faith who had been put in command of a new French army, tried to take Amiens. His counterattack was brief: he was thrown back at the Somme. General Maud'hui, who had launched an attack with fresh forces between Bethune and Arras, was no more fortunate, and was driven back to Albert. The Germans took only fifteen days to break up the French counteroffensive.

Joffre tried once again to pull his forces together. The British expeditionary corps, after sending off several hundred thousand dead and wounded to the

cemeteries and hospitals, received reinforcements from Great Britain. The Belgian army had evacuated Antwerp and could be used again. Foch was ordered to join forces with both the British and the Belgians to extend the offensive northward. He was an optimist. During the battle of the Marne he had thought it won. "The war is practically over," he wrote at the time to Clemenceau's brother. Since he was still convinced that he would be able in short order to march into Berlin on horseback, he was entrusted with an operation that might build on the victory of the Marne: encircling the Germans with the left flank of the Allied front. The objective was Ostend and the North Sea. With his left Foch planned to skirt the German right. He had been given solid French divisions from various sectors. In addition to the survivors from the Belgian army and the British expeditionary corps, he had sailors from the French navy at his disposal, to be used as infantry on this occasion. The Germans, despite being compelled to give way somewhat by Joffre, were not really beaten. They had given up a bit of terrain north of the Meuse, but they still occupied the richest and most strategic regions of France. The new commander of the German army, General von Falkenhayn, had been reinforced by 200,000 new soldiers, a great many of them volunteers, the elite of the German university youth. The French and Germans alike would fight furiously for several weeks. Result: a draw. Foch would not get to Ostend. Falkenhayn would not get to Calais. The Belgians, outflanked at the threshold of the North Sea, opened their floodgates, inundating the field of battle. The battle veered off towards Ypres. Falkenhayn sent his regiments, manned by students burning with intense patriotic fervor to attack the Flemish village of Langemarck. There they were massacred by the thousands. The British commanders readied a second time to scurry off towards their ports. The billowing sea tempted them, and Foch was hard pressed to get them to stay on French soil. Yet his famous hook hooked nothing. By mid-November 1914, it was evident to the Allies as well as to the Germans that they were both stalemated. Each failed in turn, reaping nothing but tens of thousands of additional deaths. Poincaré's victory parade of 1914 was at an end. On 29 November 1914, one of the most brilliant generals of the French army, shocked to hear high-ranking French officers at a meeting of the general staff at St. Pol advocating renewed, murderous attacks by their exhausted troops retorted furiously: "Attack! Attack! It's easy to say, but it would be like knocking over a stone monument with your bare hands." A British military critic commented, "Their attempts were no more effective than a mouse nibbling at a strongbox. But the teeth being used were the living strength of France." Poincaré's "divine moment" was about to turn into a four-year long French martyrdom. Several million Germans and Frenchmen, bloodied troglodytes of the twentieth century, would thenceforce live buried in holes-haggard, helpless, hunkered down under a rain of hundreds of millions of kilos of death-dealing machine-gun bullets.

The Russian government, on the other side of Europe, did not march triumphantly into Berlin by All Saints' Day of 1914. The victory of the little German army-the protective screen of nine divisions-which triumphed over Sazonov at Tannenberg, was completed during the same days as the battle of the Marne

by another Russian disaster suffered by General Rennenkampf at the Masurian Lakes. The Russian losses were twice those of their German assailants. Nevertheless, the Russian soldiers fulfilled the role assigned to them by Poincaré of diverting part of the Reich's troops toward the east, although they paid an extremely high price for that support. Russian blood was also costly to the Germans. Weakening their offensive in the west had caused their drive against Paris to fail, and the Germans lost their chance to destroy the French army. The Russian armies harvested nothing but disasters. They offered a stiff opposition to the Austrians, beating them in several important local battles, but gained no decisive result. Russian forces were not able to penetrate to the Hungarian plain, nor were they able to join up with the Serbians, their steppingstone to the Balkans. That was the essential thing for the Russians, the very purpose of their Pan-Slav war. They had demonstrated that left on their own they would probably never reach Belgrade, let alone Constantinople.

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The Russian armies had scarcely engaged in their first battles before Slav imperialism would be revealed as an enormous bluff. The giant had feet of clay. Russia's military command, and her political administration as well, were dens of insatiable grafters who had embezzled away a large portion of the French credits obtained to reinforce Russian military strength. Stocks of materiel supposed to have been supplied by the billions of gold francs from Paris were non-existent or comprised of defective goods. The commissions charged by the French and the depredations of Russian embezzlers had completely sabotaged quality. By the second month of the war, September 1914, many of the Tsar's troops lacked rifles, and their artillery had run out of ammunition. The following are samples of SOS messages sent from the Russian front to the responsible officials of St. Petersburg and of general headquarters: Telegram No. 4289, September 19, 1914: "Ministry of War. Secret. Personnel: the field echelon on the road, 150 rounds per gun. The regulating station echelon, none. Backup supplies are exhausted. The general reserve depots are empty." Message of September 20: "From the commander-in-chief to the Minister of War. Cabinet. Secret. Staff, section one, No. 6284: if our expenditure of artillery ammunition continues at the same rate, our total supply will be expended in six weeks. It is therefore necessary that the government face the situation as it is: either the manufacture of artillery ammunition must be considerably increased, or we shall have no means of continuing the war after the first of November." Telegram to the commander of the army, September 25, 1914, No. 6999: "Secret. Personnel: Backup supplies at present exhausted. If expenditure continues same rate, impossible to continue war for lack of ammunition within fifteen days." It had been that way almost from the first contact with the Germans. Marc Ferro (La Grande Guerre, p. 110) wrote: "As early as the month of August, the Russian General Rennenkampf made demands on his minister of war for 108,000 shrapnel shells, 17,000 high-exposive shells, and 56 million cartridges; he was offered 9,000 shrapnel shells, 2,000 high- explosive shells, and 7 million cartridges." Stocks should have been at maximum before the Russians marched. They had

been increased only once after the war's beginning. Even then, shipments were eight times less than what was needed in cartridges and twelve times less in shrapnel shells. An English officer attached to the Russian army could only note: "The battles of the Third Army were nothing but massacres, because the Russians attacked without artillery support."

The little that the Russian troops had brought along was shockingly defective. At Tannenberg, the Russian machine guns almost all jammed at the end of a few hours. A third of the cartridges failed to fire. Half the artillery shells did not correspond in caliber to the artillery pieces. Renouvin, the French historian, wrote these startling lines: "In Russia, the crisis in materiel is alarming. The troops lack rifles: the supplies laid in before the war have barely sufficed to cover the losses of the first two or three months ...The factories are not even manufacturing the guns necessary to equip the reinforcements." It was the same with machine guns: "The infantry has never had the number of machine guns provided for by regulations, and production is not sufficient to cover losses." As for the artillery: "The replenishment of artillery ammunition shows a heavy deficit: the army asks for a million and a half shells per month; the industry is providing it with 360,000." (La Crise européene, pp. 274f) "The Russian army," Renouvin concluded, "is worse off than it has ever been..." Soon half the Russian infantrymen would be armed only with clubs. General Denikin would write these haunting lines from the front:

"Two regiments were almost completely destroyed by artillery fire. When after a silence of three days our battery received fifty shells, it was immediately made known by telephone to all the regiments and all the companies, to the joy and relief of the men." After listening to the complaints of Grand Duke Nicholas in the latter's command car-the grand duke now pallid and emaciated, his features drawn- Ambassador Paléologue, the French firebrand of St. Petersburg, sent the following dismaying note to his boss, Poincaré: "This evening I see the Russian army as a paralyzed giant, still capable of striking formidable blows at adversaries within reach, but powerless to pursue them." By then, half of the Russian army had already been put out of action - more than two million casualties, 834,000 of whom had been killed. Like the Russians the French government at the end of a month was forced to beg for guns, cartridges, and cannon from all over the world, from Portugal, from Spain, and even from Japan. Telegram from the French ambassador at Tokyo, No. 36, September 1, 1914: "Japan is willing to sell us 50,000 rifles and 20 million cartridges, whereas we most urgently asked for 600,000 rifles." A personal confession by Poincaré: "By September 8 there were only 200 75mm guns in reserve. Fifty batteries had been ordered from Creusot, but the firm took four months to complete the first four." (Poincaré, L'Invasion, p. 264) "Millerand hoped that we'd be able to buy the batteries in Spain and in Portugal." (Poincaré, op. cit.) "The model 1886 rifle was being manufactured at the rate of 1,400 per day." Fourteen hundred rifles for an army of more than two million men. And rifles, moreover, of a model already more than a quarter of a century old. And this: What struck Joffre was the shortage of ammunition. Jean Retinaud writes: "They went off

to war with a supply of 1390 rounds per 75mm gun. The supplies have fallen to 695 rounds, and only 10,000 rounds are being manufactured per day (for more than 3,500 cannon). Joffre is so concerned about it at this point that the only document he carries with him all the time, the one thing he is never without, is a little notebook in which the exact ammunition count is kept." (Ferro, La Grande Guerre, p. 105) Ten thousand rounds for 3,500 cannon; that boded less than three rounds per day per gun in the future, hardly enough to bracket a target! Joffre went so far as to have the number of rounds fired by the combat units reported to him daily. Here is his order: "Every evening, or every night before ten o'clock, each army will inform me by telegram of the number of rounds used during the day." Such was the abyss out of which he would have to climb, with infinite difficulty, while a million French soldiers fell. The essential manufactures would only be achieved by recruiting hundreds of thousands of coolie factory hands in Asia. Only then would it be possible to rebuild a viable French war industry, sufficient to assure the supply of ammunition to the front.

In truth, everyone had lost in 1914. No army had remotely achieved its objective. The richest provinces of France, representing 85 percent of her economic resources, were in the hands of the Germans: 40 percent of her coal; 80 percent of her coke; 90 percent of her iron ore; 70 percent of her foundries; 80 percent of her steel; 80 percent of her equipment. That despite the Marne, a transitory victory that succeeded only in pushing the enemy back from one river to another. At the end of 1914 it was impossible to imagine when France would recover its lost territory, let alone Alsace and Lorraine. Rain and snow fell endlessly on two million bronchitic soldiers buried, chilled to the marrow, in long, muddy trenches. A hundred meters from the French, the barbed wire, machine guns, and cannon of another two million soldiers, Prussians, Württemburgers, Saxons, and Bavarians, barred all access to the north and east. There was no hope of dislodging them from their positions at the beginning of that unlucky winter. Would they ever be driven out? No one ventured any longer to predict. France's wonderful war had stink into a morass of millions of bleaching bones. Britain's leaders had no more cause for rejoicing. A hundred thousand Tommies had fallen. The rest were floundering in a foreign land, chilled by the North Sea booming behind them, demoralized by the shells falling on their flat helmets, inverted soupbowls on which the shrapnel rang like sleigh bells. Hindus came to the rescue of the British. And New Zealanders. And Australians. All were bewildered at having to fight and die for local quarrels they knew nothing about. What could a Flemish village with a collapsed bell tower mean to a citizen of Sydney? And whose interest was he really defending in those putrid marshes? The war seemed prehistoric and absurd to all of them. Marshal French was right, they must have said to themselves, in wanting to lead them out of this vile mud and regain the tranquility of their native hearths in England or Scotland.

The Russian leaders had foundered even more completely than the British and the French. They had learned in that autumn of 1914 that they could never win with only their own forces, and that this war, which they had envisioned as the annihilation of the Germans by the French, had turned into a gigantic

slaughter of their people. Now, they were running short of everything: arms, materiel, men.

Despite Austria-Hungary's weaknesses, Germany would pound Russia harder every day with her enormous iron mace, as the Teutonic Knights had done hundreds of years before. The long-suffering Russian people would in the end escape from the clutches of the rabble-rousing grand dukes. Imperial St. Petersburg already knew it, sensed it, and even smelled the catastrophe.

For the Serbs, although they had been able to contain and even repulse the Austrians in the beginning, the battles had served no purpose. Germany was watching and could invade Serbia at any time. Russia had come to a standstill in her campaign to reach Serbian territory; she would never succeed. For the Allies 1914 was marked by catastrophe.

On the German side it had been the same.

The kaiser's victory in the west, almost achieved by the end of August 1914, had sunk beneath the waters of the Marne. To win the war with Russia, Germany needed to have finished the war with France in no more than seven weeks. Germany had defeated neither France nor Russia, and she found herself irretrievably involved in wars on two fronts, which in 1914 had seemed impossible. She found herself in the middle of a double conflict.

In the west, German armies had occupied a considerable territory in vain; the Germans were condemned to immobility, exactly like the French, the British, and the Belgians opposing her.

In the east, Germany had warded off a savage invasion. The Russians had only rudimentary weapons to fight with, and sometimes none at all; but there were millions of them who would march en masse to death. Vast reaches of space stretched away towards the Urals and the Yenisei. To venture there would be to drown, to be swallowed up, to be frozen.

The Austrians, who might have been able, that August of 1914, to chastise the Serbians if they'd had only dealt with them, had suffered one reverse after another, like a blind man stumbling from one pothole to the next.

All of them, absolutely all of them, had failed. The future loomed before them like a great wall that could no longer be broken through or scaled by any of them. The warring governments would have to invent myths and pretexts, to offer fabulous material advantages in order to lure millions of other men to replace the fallen combatants and die like them.

How would they be able to convince some, cajole others? In the name of what?

Chapter 20

Armed With Hatred

Instead of rifles, machine guns, and cannon, which in the last analysis accomplished nothing, the leaders of the Entente would resort to the weapon of the powerless: hatred. Hatred is the spice that makes a rotten or tasteless political stew almost acceptable. The allied governments would use it to season every bellicose appeal, every chauvinistic tirade, and every line churned out by the propagandists, so that every foot soldier mired in mud, or foreign replacement they sought to draw into their hellish cauldron, would firmly believe it was a matter of his own honor and the dignity of mankind that Germany be crushed, and that the sadistic Kaiser, that sawed-off dwarf grimacing beneath his crested helmet, be boiled in oil. Before August 1914, the propaganda-peddlers had depicted the German people as a tribe of cannibals. Even Maurras, the most cultured French politician of his time, would be so carried away as to denounce "the innate savagery of the instincts of flesh and blood" of the Prussians, while Bergson, the eminent philosopher, would discover "in the brutality and cynicism of Germany, a regression to the savage state." Clemenceau would write (Grandeur et misère d'une victoire, p. 334), "I wish to believe that civilization will carry the day against savagery, and that is sufficient for me to rule out the German from a life of common dignity." He added:

The insufferable arrogance of the German aristocracy, the servile genius of the intellectual and the scholar, the crude vanity of the most well-adjusted industrial leader and the exuberance of a violent popular literature conspire to shatter all the barriers of individual as well as international dignity.

William II, of whom the French military attaché in Berlin had written, "1 am absolutely convinced that he is for peace," in the writings of this same Clemenceau became "an unnameable piece of imperial degradation"; and Germanic civilization became "only a monstrous explosion." The following effusion is typical of the crude nonsense of which the most celebrated French politician of the First World War talked when he was describing the German people:

Every now and then I have entered the sacred cave of the German religion, which, as we know, is the beer-garden. A great nave of stolid humanity where may be heard swelling amid the stale odors of beer and tobacco and the familiar rumblings of a nationalism sustained by the bellowing of a brass band and carrying to the highest pitch the supreme German voice: "Germany over all!" Men, women, and children, petrified before the divine will of an irrepressible power, foreheads lined, eyes lost in a dream of the infinite, mouths twisted by the intensity of desire - in great gulps they all drink the celestial hope of unknown fulfillment.

That was the way a government leader in France represented Germany in the twentieth century. Despite the fact that "Germany over all," Deutschland über alles, in no way meant a Germany over everything and everyone, but merely over the numerous petty regionalisms that in the preceding century were still often opposed to a unified German nation.. state. Educated people knew that. For Clemenceau however, the most important nation of Europe was just a conglomeration of buffoons, gluttons, and drunkards capable only of the "eternal violence of fundamentally savage tribes for purposes of depredation by every means of barbarism." (Clemenceau, p. 88) Once the war began, in August 1914, it was a matter of fanning this bitter scorn to white heat, then transforming it into irrepressible hatred. Colonel de Grandmaison even exclaimed: "Let us go too far, and that will perhaps not be enough." Apocalyptic pictures were painted of German heinousness so that every soldier would be truly convinced that he was fighting against the supreme horror, against "evil." The campaign quickly spread abroad, in order to arouse the terrified indignation of the whole world against the Reich and, above all, to bring about the foreign military enlistments that would end in glorious non-French deaths in Champagne, in Flanders, and in Artois. The most fantastic of all the calumnies launched was the story of the cut-off hands. Today no supporter of the Allies of 1914-1918 would dare to drag out that moth-eaten canard, so thoroughly has it been refuted. Yet that sinister tale went around the world. According to the Allied propagandists, in August of 1914 the Germans cut off the hands of thousands of Belgian children. Descriptions of these abominations found their way to the uttermost ends of the earth and were a factor in the U.S. entry into the war in 1917. In Italy, in 1915, the shops selling church ornaments sold statuettes of a little Belgian girl with her hands cut off, holding out her arms all bloody to Christ's mother: "Holy Virgin, make them grow again!" Benito Mussolini himself told me one day how one of the most important political figures on the side of the Allies, Emile Vandervelde, had used that argument on him to convince him of the allies' righteousness and Italy's duty to join the war. Here, word for word, is what the Fascist leader told me years later, when he was at the summit of his glory: One fine morning in the spring of 1915, Emile Vandervelde, head of the Belgian socialist party and then president of the Second International, came to see me. The Allies sent him to me as they already had Marcel Cachin, the future head of the French communists. Back then, we were party comrades. I received him. He reeled off his arguments in favor of Italy's participation in the war on the

side of the Allies. It was then that he began to explain to me in great detail the story of the children with their hands cut off by the Germans. That made an impression on me, and he realized it. "Mussolini," he said to me, taking me by the coat, "you're an upright man. Do you really believe we can let such frightful crimes go unpunished, and that you don't have an obligation to join us to fight the country that commits such atrocities?" He stopped, looked at me as though he had been crucified. I reflected an instant. "Yes, Vandervelde, what you tell me is appalling. It is obvious that such monstrousness must be suppressed. But tell me yourself, Vandervelde, have you witnessed a single case of cut-off hands? Have you seen any? Do you know any men of complete reliability who have seen it?" Vandervelde drew himself up, quite taken aback. "Mussolini, your question astonishes me. This affair is so obvious to me that I've not given it a thought. No, I do not know of any case personally, that's true. But there have been thousands of them. You shall see, I'll bring you a complete file." Two months later Vandervelde turned up in Italy again. Something appeared to be preying on his mind and he was anxious to speak to me at once. "Mussolini, you remember our conversation about the cut-off hands. I shouldn't like to be dishonest, nor to have tried to mislead you. I promised you I would, and I did make a search. Ah well, here it is. I interrogated people everywhere, and I didn't find a single case. Nowhere did anyone tell me where I could find someone who knew of a case. I let myself be influenced. But I don't want you to believe that I wished to influence you in turn. That story, I am now convinced, is without foundation. I owed you the truth. There it is." Vandervelde was propriety itself. Learning that he had been deceived, he recanted. But he was one of the very few Allied propagandists to do so throughout the First World War, or afterwards. That gigantic slander in particular poisoned the minds of millions of persons of good faith. Since the war, Allied historians have had several decades to repeat Vandervelde's investigation on a scientific basis. No one has ever found a single child, Belgian or otherwise, who had his hands cut off by the Germans. As if after the defeat of Germany in 1918, one mutilated youngster wouldn't have been exhibited all over the world if he could have been found! Nobody. Nothing. A complete lie. It is often said that where there's smoke, there's fire. There had not been any fire, nor even any smoke. The slander had been made up out of whole cloth, with supreme propagandistic cunning to besmirch the opponent and make him hated. Since then, there have been many other examples of this sort of base atrocity propaganda, but this remains a classic case of a total, enormous lie spread throughout the entire world, painting a people black for years afterward.

There was also the story of the candy. In 1914, if one was to believe the Allied propaganda, the Germans had handed out poisoned candy everywhere, as if they had been confectioners rather than soldiers. In 1940 this anti-German myth would be served up for a second time. In May of 1940, Le Figaro, the most responsible newspaper in France, would even give the exact dimensions of the poison candy (17 by 17 by 5 millimeters) on its front page. To be sure, none of this famous candy ever put in an appearance either on Figaro's table

or anywhere else. It was a particularly idiotic tale. It is hard to know how poison candy could have helped the Germans in their offensive in 1940 or in 1941. Those sugary fabrications served up a thousand times in the French and then in the world press, like the stories of the cut-off hands, did more damage to the Germans than a million shells. The great majority of people are naive and will believe anything when it is printed in black and white. The story will be repeated and repeated ad nauseam. It becomes a mass hallucination. Almost inevitably the hearer is stirred to a fever pitch and completely convinced. The propaganda of the Allies was awful in its cynicism, in its unlimited exploitation of lies so flagrant they would have been unbelievable in normal times. Decent men let themselves be hoodwinked just like the rest. Misled totally by such compelling falsehoods, millions of naive people began to snarl in hatred. During my youth, I believed in those lies totally, just as I believed the historical lie of the exclusive responsibility of the Germans for the Great War. On the other hand, the Pan-Slav provocateurs, and swindlers like Poincaré, were to us heroes comparable to heroic and chivalrous knights. From Paris and Brussels down to the tiniest hamlet of Belgium or France, we were all overwhelmed by that mendacious propaganda. It was so intensive that it was impossible not to believe it. The Germans were monsters-that had become dogma.

Yet those of us in the occupied areas, with front-row seats so to speak, saw the Germans at close range. They were often courteous and generally affectionate to the children. No doubt they were thinking of their own children.

I remember especially Christmas, 1917. German officers had requisitioned all the good rooms in the large house in which I was born. We seven children had to move into the attic, up under the roof. For us little Christians, Christmas meant the Nativity scene, represented by a creche. Consequently we were intrigued by the passage through the great family hall of a fir tree, which an officer then set up in his room. He was a plump little man, round as a barrel from my parents' brewery. By peeking through the keyhole of the door to the German's room, we saw the tree all ornamented with stars, with colored lights, and with packages. On Christmas Eve the officer, for the first time in the six months he'd been staying with us, gave a few little knocks at the entrance to the living room. He addressed my mother ceremoniously: "Madam, it is Christmas, and I have made up a few little gifts for your children. Will you permit them to come and take them off the tree?" My mother was very gentle. She spoke German, and was not eager to offend the foreigner. Nevertheless we children, bewildered, heard her say solemnly: "Monsieur, you well know that our countries are enemies. Please understand that our children can not possibly receive presents from an enemy." The poor man made a polite little bow and withdrew. We, the little ones, who had glimpsed the mirage through the keyhole, were crushed. That's the way things were-one didn't associate with the enemy even if, like my youngest sister, Suzanne, you were only six years old!

* * *

The longer the war continued, the more we were all affected by the world-

wide wave of hatred. We believed any story whatsoever. We were eager to believe. For some years those improbable calumnies left a mark on me, even when I was studying at the university, when the most elementary examination of history ought to have enlightened me. The atrocity lies were poured into our skulls like molten metal. Even long after the defeat of William II, a large placard on the door of my parents' home continued to proclaim: "Nothing from the Germans, nothing to the Germans." For all that, 1 one day got an unexpected glimmer of the genuineness of these sentiments. In 1919 my father ordered some new tuns to replace the copper equipment of our brewery, which had been turned into ammunition by the Germans. Not manufactured by the Germans, naturally, those monsters who cut off hands and poisoned candy, but from our dear allies, the worthy British. On the day they arrived, the entire local population accompanied the wagons transporting the enormous vats, which were brilliantly bedecked with ribbons. Curious, and struck with wonder at their size, I examined them with pride, until I discovered graven in the metal a large inscription which left me flabbergasted: "Made in Germany." Less naive than ourselves, our valiant British allies had, for a nice commission, fobbed off on us equipment manufactured by those spurned and sickening Germans, whom we had thought forever expelled from humankind. No doubt the British had never felt constrained to put much credence in the severed hands of Belgian children and in the murderous candy.

These bloody legends were augmented by many others of the most varied kind. Another one which stirred the conscience of the world was the affair of the Belgian snipers. There is certainly no question that the Germans went all out in combat. That was the way wars were fought in those days, the military manners of the age. If soldiers were fired on by villagers, the village paid for it. Houses went up in flames. The presumed civilian aggressors - violators of the rules of land warfare of that era - were hunted down and often killed. The British had been no less quick to act in their campaigns in India, nor the Americans in their march westward, nor the French of NapoLéon during the campaign in Spain, to judge by the atrocities immortalized by Goya. In the course of their dash across Belgium in August 1914, the Germans unquestionably killed a certain number of civilians who were not necessarily innocent and not necessarily guilty. The settling of accounts took place on the spot, in the heat of the moment. The Germans explained that when they were ambushed by civilians, they simply had to counter with severity. For me, a youngster eight years old, one case was beyond dispute. In my little town of Bouillon, a neighbor took up a perch, armed with his rifle, atop a tall fir on the main road and fired on the Germans when they came into view. Three days later two other citizens of Bouillon fired on other enemy soldiers. So there were instances of Belgian sniping, at least those two. But to have spoken of it would have constituted a kind of treason. In August 1914 it was necessary to assert that not a single civilian had opened fire from ambush. The Belgian people had not taken any part in the sniping, nor fired on a single advancing German. Here, too, the contention took on the aspect of dogma. The Legend of the Snipers: that was the title of a hefty book

sold throughout Belgium after the war.

This tale of the massacre of completely innocent civilians thus became another international catch-phrase of Allied propaganda. It took a very simple idea on the part of a German of rank who had been exasperated by these accusations to set matters straight. He was the Baron van der Lancken, a diplomat and very well known in Parisian society before 1914. Before him, no one thought of consulting the essential records, the files of the Germans who were wounded. In the military hospitals every wounded man had a chart on which the nature of his wounds was noted. Van der Lancken made an exhaustive investigation of all the charts of the Germans wounded in Belgium in August 1914. He discovered that hundreds of the men had been wounded not by bullets or shrapnel, but by shotgun pellets! Everything was now clear. Those hundreds of Germans wounded by buckshot, as if they had been wild game, couldn't have been shot by French or Belgian or British soldiers; someone had to have fired at them with guns intended for the Sunday hunt. Hence the countermeasures, the ravaging of a few villages and towns where civilians had rashly shot at the Germans in contravention of international law. The Hague Convention was quite explicit: only soldiers who were recognizable as such were allowed to bear arms. Civilians were excluded from combat unless they wore a uniform or at the very least some distinctive and very obvious sign. Otherwise the use of a weapon was and is grounds for execution.

There was in Belgium a secondary category of impromptu combatants not authorized by the international conventions: the civil guards. The latter formed a sort of town militia that was prohibited from taking any part in the war. That express prohibition was emphasized to them on August 4, 1914, the first day of hostilities. Some of them did not comply and, armed with their old service rifles, here and there fired on the invaders, provoking bloody reprisals. The newspaper of these local guards moreover had a provocative name: Le Franc-Tireur (The Sniper). But a sniper automatically places himself outside international law if he is not normally a member of the military units provided for by law in the event of war. It would be the same in 1940-1945, when Germans were many a time killed in Belgium, in Holland, and in France by members of the "resistance"-men disguised as civilians, indistinguishable from the general population, who disappeared once they had struck. Such attacks were outside international law. When irresponsible men commit them, such illegal acts are sometimes dearly paid for, often by hostages in lieu of the attackers, who have disappeared. The primary culprit is the non-soldier who fires, wounds, or kills, not the soldier who takes justified reprisals. Such was the general case with regard to the civilians killed in Belgium in 1914.

Every conceivable story was used to build up hatred during the course of the First World War. The Germans had been so barbarous, if you can imagine it, that they had everywhere deliberately cut down the apple trees of France. An accusation ridiculous on the face of it, but for a few less trees in the orchards of France or a few apples missing from the fruitseller's window, a hysterical campaign would be unleashed with repercussions clear to the coral reefs of

Australia and the glaciers of Greenland. What interest could the Germans possibly have in depriving the French of a few apple tarts? If it had been a question of corn or cattle, well and good; the Allies had no compunctions after the armistice of 1918 about requisitioning foodstuffs, including herds of cattle, in a starving Germany against which they had long maintained the cruelest of blockades. But apples? The stories of devastated orchards made no sense. The Germans, to be sure, now and then cut down trees that interfered with their artillery fire. All the armies of the world would do the same thing. In January 1983, in Lebanon, months after the cessation of hostilities, the Israelis were still cutting down groves of poplars that form a screen south of Beirut, limiting the field of vision at the approaches to the airport. In no way did the Germans commit graver crimes in chopping down a few fruit trees that were in the way. No matter. The few apples the French didn't get to bite into would be one more weapon in the arsenal of Allied propaganda. Not since Adam and Eve has a story about apples created such a hullabaloo.

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That is not to say there were no Germans here and there capable of violence. There are savages in all countries; humanity is not a host of angels. The French, the Belgians, the British, the Americans, too, had their sadists who committed war crimes as often, and sometimes more, than the defeated Germans. The only difference is that the victors came out of the affair with glory, and instead of being condemned to death, reaped decorations, promotions, and liberal pensions. Three quarters of a century after the First World War, the accusations of cut-off hands, of civilians killed, of apple trees destroyed, which created such a stir at the time, appear almost insignificant today. What do they amount to alongside, not the legends, but the facts that the world has known since then? Facts such as the frightful terrorist bombings of Hamburg and Dresden and so many other German cities during the Second World War, bombings in which hundreds of thousands of defenseless civilians were carbonized. Or such as the atom bombings of the civilian population of a Japan that asked only to surrender. Each time the goal has been to create hate and counterhate, an overriding objective in 1914 especially. In the month of August the war had ground to a halt, and it was necessary to keep the weary or disheartened people in a state of frenzied excitement. Hatred, the number one weapon, fired man's mind. What did it matter if there wasn't a word of truth to the horrifying stories? The propaganda rendered the Germans hateful: that was its only aim. The waves of that anti-German hatred still roll after three quarters of a century. Not that men still talk of cut-off hands; most people have never heard that tale. Young people look at you in amazement and even suspicion if you tell them about it. The stories of the snipers and the apple trees are no longer remembered either. Some people occasionally remember that Belgium, so often raped in the course of her history, was violated once again on 1914 by the Germans in their mad dash towards Paris. The particular hatreds created then no longer have their old vigor, but a dark and profound aversion to the Germans has stolen into the minds of millions since those days. Without genuine reason they hate the

Germans. They recognize that the Germans are first-rate as regards their factories and in their business dealings; that they gave the civilized world Goethe, Schiller, Darer, Kant, Nietzsche, and Wagner. But for millions of non-Germans, the Germans are brutes, capable of anything. That summary judgement, born of the invented horrors laid to the Germans in 1914, has remained in the subconscious of the public. Let the occasion arise again, and that mentality is reborn at once, as we saw in 1940-1945. Anything at all will be believed if it is charged to the Germans. Whether it's a question of gas chambers in which, to believe the figures of the accusers, the victims would have to have been crowded together thirty-two persons per square meter twenty-four hours a day; or whether a description is being given to you of the crematory furnaces which, if they had to burn up all the bodies assigned to them by the Jewish propaganda, would still be working at full capacity in the year 2050, or even 2080. When it's a matter of denigrating Germans, nothing need be verified. Any testimony whatsoever, whether from liar, conman, swindler, or whether or wrested from an accused person by torture, is swallowed with rapture. It has been decided in advance that Germans can't ever have been anything but dreadful cutthroats. Countless persons still unconsciously carry around the old complexes born of the hocus-pocus of 1914, accepting everything as true, however improbable, unreasonable, or even grotesque, without weighing or studying a thing. "Those German monsters!," they think. And the matter is settled.

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The strangest thing is that this hatred of the Germans is unique. Since 1789 French governments have far surpassed the Germans in horror.

NapoLéon didn't send the inhabitants of occupied countries to work camps but to the hecatombs of his subsequent campaigns (196,000 soldiers were conscripted by force in Belgium alone). In Spain the French armies committed horrible atrocities. But no disparaging memory of the French nation is cultivated. It is the same with the British establishment, who steeped the whole world in blood in the course of subjugating its colonies and even carried out the total annihilation of a race in the mass murder of the Tasmanians.

And the same is true of the American politicians, who took half of Mexico at the point of a gun and enslaved millions of blacks, and who exterminated hundreds of thousands of Japanese at Hiroshima and Nagasaki with frightful cruelty. If Truman and his backers had accepted Japan's surrender offer, instead of demanding "unconditional surrender," all those lives would have been spared.

When it is a question of non-Germans, such slaughters are the misfortunes of war. As news items they are forgotten after a few decades. But for the Germans, the ordeal of their "war crimes," true or false, is never over. Germany's sins, real or invented, are to be publicized until the end of time.

The persistance of this hatred illustrates the force, and the frenzy, with which public opinion was poisoned by the Allied governments between 1914 and 1918,

in order to stir up their people at home to fight and to recruit a maximum of cannon fodder from abroad. And to the extent to which the public was led astray in the Allied countries, the political and moral foundations of the Versailles Treaty of 1919 were inexorably established.

By eliminating or inventing diplomatic documents - the tsarist bureaucracy destroyed or faked some eighty per cent of its foreign policy documents from 1914 to 1917 - the Allied leadership convinced the world that the horrible Germans were solely and totally responsible for the war of 1914. On the day of reckoning, June 28, 1919 at Versailles, the barbarous Germans would pay the price of their total responsibility for the war. The Versailles Treaty of 1919, in the same spirit as the war, would be the Treaty of Vengeance against German crimes, for which no punishment would be sufficiently severe.

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But it would be a long and bloody road to Versailles. At year's end in 1914, on the mud and snow-clogged European fronts, millions of men worn out from suffering no longer had even the strength to imagine how they could ever extricate themselves from the mire in which the corpses of their enemies and their companions rotted by the tens, the hundreds of thousands. If the leaders of the slaughter intended to prolong the war at all cost, it would be necessary to procure immense quantities of raw materials, the stockpiling of which no one had given a thought to before the hostilities, since the war would certainly be of short duration.

Above all it was imperative to obtain millions of new soldiers, at little or no cost, no matter where or how, in Europe or outside of Europe, without regard for men's opinions, their freedoms, or their lives.

From 1915 on, many peoples subjected to this slave trade would be sold at auction. Twenty-seven countries would be dragged into that insanity, to be sure in the name of Right. In the name of Right, 32 million men would be maimed; from 1915 to 1918, 8 million dead would lie scattered and mangled in filthy mud all the way from the Yser to Mount Sinai.

The quest for future cannon fodder began. First Turkey, then Italy, would be dragged into the affair.

Chapter 21

Debacle on the Dardanelles

The Russian Pan-Slavists, in greater distress than the others, were the first ones to demand the intervention of Italy. Despite the weakness of Austria-Hungary, the Russian army had not been able to smash her. By 1915 only the creation of a new front on the northern extremity of Italy could offer the likelihood of providing the tsarist regime some relief. If intervention by the Italians could be achieved, part of the Austrian forces on the eastern front would have to be transferred immediately to the new field of battle in the Tyrol. That would mean hundreds of thousands fewer combatants facing the Russians and Serbians. "Right" had nothing to do with these plans. Italy was not threatened by anyone. On the contrary, the later Italy entered the European conflict, the fewer deaths the adventure would cost. But the Pan-Slavists could not wait, as is shown by the astounding remarks that Grand Duke Nicholas had charged Ambassador Paléologue with transmitting to Poincaré at the end of 1914, after only a few months of war. The grand duke's warning was as sharp as a saber thrust: "I must speak to you of serious matters. 1 am not talking to you now as Grand Duke Nicholas but as a Russian general. 1 am obligated to tell you that the immediate cooperation of Italy and Romania is an imperative necessity." The former warmonger-in-chief of July 1914 had added: "I say again and I emphasize: of inestimable value." Yet the Russian government had nearly half a million more soldiers at its disposal than the Austrians and Germans combined. At one time the tsarist regime disposed of twice as many. At the end of January 1915, she mustered 1,843,0(30 soldiers against 1,071,000 German and Austrian troops Combined. But already Russia's leaders felt the ground giving way. That the Austro-German pressure be reduced was imperative. Otherwise, though hardly into the war, Russia stood to lose it.

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The situation of the western allies was scarcely less perilous. Despite the costly victory of the battle of the Marne, which had represented no more than the

reconquest of a department, the French high command had persisted in its wish to return to the offensive in the dead of winter. On December 16, 1914 it had tried to break the German front in Artois, and had been unable to drive a wedge in anywhere. From December 20 to January 30, 1915, it attacked again, this time in Champagne. A second defeat. The attack was resumed from February 16 to March 16, 1915. A third defeat. Miserable terrain, abominably wet. Impossible to make any headway. The artillery was inaccurate: on several occasions the French guns fired on the French infantry. No advance, and a terrible massacre on the German barbed-wire entanglements, which were uncrossable. Yet the lesson of this triple carnage would have no effect. In May and in June of 1915 French, English, and even Canadian troops would again be sent off to the slaughter. The maximum ground gained would be a kilometer at one point, four kilometers at another. In September 1915 the British and French would give that back for the fifth time in less than ten months. Then the command would double the stakes, mounting two offensives simultaneously, in Artois and in Champagne. Joffre's order of the day: "Allow the enemy neither rest nor respite until the achievement of victory." But as he confessed to the King of Belgium: "It may succeed and it may not." It didn't. The British command counted on winning through a surprise weapon: poison gas. But the winds were unfavorable, and the gas rolled back upon their own troops. In Artois it was impossible even to cross the first river, the Souche. In Champagne the Germans cleverly slipped away, settling down four kilometers to the rear in a second line of positions. The. French would bang their heads against a stone wall there for eleven days. Finally they would have to end their useless attacks and dig in once again. "At whatever cost," Joffre had said. They were learning the cost: 400,000 dead or taken prisoner and a million wounded or evacuated due to illness. British losses were of similar proportion. The front had become a deathtrap. A different tack was needed, some pretext or other to bring about additional fronts on which new, foreign armies would bear the brunt instead of the French and British armies. The Tommies and poilus had been bled white five times in succession in a matter of months and were at a point of an exhaustion which could prove fatal.

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The Russian and Anglo-French political interests thus coincided. The winning over of Italy was of great importance. An Italian front would provide a safety valve, and Italy represented a source of several million new soldiers, a magnet that would draw enemy forces to the Tyrol and to the Adriatic. Italy's support was all the more indispensable because Germany herself had been reinforced by Turkey. Turkey, as a matter of fact, had entered the war against the tsarist expansionists on October 29, 1914. Just before Britain's declaration of war on August 4, 1914, Germany had been able to slip her two splendid cruisers, the Göben and the Breslau, through the Straits and past Constantinople as nimble and quick as two flying fish. A few days earlier they had still been in the middle of the Mediterranean. In the course of a sensational odyssey, they had been

able to elude the Allied ships pursuing them, making sport of them thanks to their speed. Since then thay had bottled up the Russian fleet, preventing the Russians from exporting wheat and receiving war materiel. On August 29, 1914 they had boldly bombarded Sevastopol, Odessa, and Novorossiysk. One important advantage for Germany: with Turkey in the war, considerable Russian forces would be drawn to the Caucasus and held there. Another outstanding consideration: Turkey was Muslim, the sultan the spiritual leader of Islam. Turkey might thus stir up all the Islamic countries then under British control and foment rebellion in them. At that time Turkey extended almost to the Suez Canal: her armies would perhaps even be able to reach it and cut that vital artery of the British Empire.

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The Allies, conscious of the danger, had tried everything since the beginning of August 1914 to counteract German offers. The British and the French had gladly made the Turks extraordinary concessions in Thrace and in the Aegean Sea in order to win them over to their side, or at last to keep them neutral. But the Russians had gone to war on August 1, 1914 precisely and primarily in order to win Constantinople. Consequently, the Russian expansionists not only didn't dread a war on the part of the Allies against the Turks - they longed for it. Thus the Anglo-French-Turkish negotiations ran completely counter to their own intentions. Sazonov replied to the Anglo-French negotiators that in allowing talks he desired only "to gain some time without making any declarations which would bind us to anything." Britain, anxious to make an alliance with Turkey, had gone so far as to offer to guarantee her the integrity of her territory - hence of her capital, Constantinople, the number-one objective of the Pan-Slavs. At the same time, however, with a hypocrisy worthy of centuries of duplicity, the British establishment had informed the Russians in great secrecy that "the guarantee was valid only for the duration of the war in progress," and that "Russia would always be able, after the conclusion of the general peace, to resolve the question of the Straits to her own satisfaction" (Renouvin, La Crise européenne, p. 263) The Russians, knowing the British and sensing the trap, demanded a written pledge of unlimited duration, which put an end to these duplicitous negotiations. The parleying had lasted no longer then it would have taken an ox to cross the Bosphorus. It hadn't been viable; the Anglo-French aims and the Russian aims were completely antithetical. When it had come to the bidding, Germany had won. The Pan-Slavists, their pretensions unscathed and the game of the perfidious British establishment countered, were no better off: for they were now faced with another front right in the middle of the Caucasus. This made it all the more imperative for them to mitigate the new danger by creating another Allied front in Italy or Romania.

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In autumn, 1914 the Japanese were able to provide the Allies with a measure of compensation for their misadventures with the Turks; on August 23, 1914,

the Japanese, on the other side of the globe, entered the war against Germany. The internal quarrels of the Europeans were no more to Japan than a news story from a faraway land. The only importance of the war in their eyes was the opportunity it afforded them of seizing Germany's indefensible territories in the middle of the Pacific, and in the Far East, in particular the outstanding naval base of Kiaochow in the Shantung province of China. The Germans, their hands full in Europe, were at a loss to defend Far Eastern possessions ten thousand kilometers from Berlin while their lives were at stake at Chateau-Thierry on the Marne at the end of August 1914. On November 7, 1914, the handful of Germans defending Shantung was obliged to capitulate. At the same time Japan seized the port of Tsingtao. The Allies, especially the French, naively imagined that the Japanese, their pockets thus effortlessly filled, would immediately come running to the West as intrepid "knights on the side of Right." Unbelievably ingenuous, the French and British leaders asked the Japanese to form an expeditionary corps of three or four army corps for that purpose. That would have brought hundreds of thousands of Japanese soldiers to the European fronts. "We must not overlook any means," French Minister Delcassé declared. In fact, the Japanese would not be seen in Paris until forty years later, after two world wars. Their weapons would then be autos, cameras, and video cassettes. A note from the Japanese government politely informed the Allies that apart from one or another symbolic mission, its troops were assigned to their home territory and did not intend to take part in foreign conflicts of whose causes they knew nothing. The French politicians simply couldn't understand. The Japanese prime minister had to explain it to them a second time: "What is the need of sending Japanese troops to Europe if we have no direct interest there?"

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It was Churchill, imaginative to the point of extravagance, who furnished the first new field of battle. He had already dreamt of a landing in Schleswig, then in the Adriatic near Pola. Now he fixed his gaze upon Europe's other extremity, the Dardanelles. It was a way of chastising the Turks for not responding to British promises and for having preferred those blockheaded Germans. The Germans had been on the best of terms with the Sublime Porte for some years. In Anatolia, before the war, they were constructing a railway line intended to link Germany and Baghdad. Thanks to the new railroad, Turkey was opening up her territory to European trade. In exchange, German industrialists had obtained mining and oil concessions on both sides of this Asian railway line. There remained only nine hundred kilometers of rail to throw across the desert, and Berlin would have a balcony on the Persian Gulf. For the British bankers of the City the intrusion of the Germans into the Near East was poaching. The Gulf belonged to them. Hurling a British army at the Turks would drive off competitors, and assure their monopoly on petroleum, which in 1914 was as British as whiskey was Scotch. Finally, forcing passage of the Straits would enable them to join up with the Russians. "It is hard to imagine an operation offering more hope," Balfour prophesied. Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, was so sure of entering Constantinople, like the Ottomans in 1453, that he proposed

naming his expeditionary force the "Constantinople Expeditionary Force." On January 28, 1915, the British government ratified his plan. There was grumbling in the ranks however. Lord Fisher, his assistant, was convinced that without the complete support of the Greeks - who were clinging to their neutrality - the operation would be a monumental failure. But to rope the Greeks into the campaign meant bringing them to Constantinople, which they were as anxious to conquer as were the Russian Pan Slavists. That ran the risk of seeing an "archon" (as in the time of the Byzantine empire) set himself up there instead of the tsar. George V had promised the city to his St. Petersburg cousin, who was absolutely determined to be another Basiliscus. So it would be necessary to dispense with the Greeks temporarily. There was another complication. The Allied generals, whose forces had taken a terrible beating on the French front, refused to furnish any contingents. Churchill, who would have ousted the Eternal Father from his celestial throne if he had found him at all hesitant, wasn't disconcerted in the slightest by something so minor. He wouldn't even consult with Joffre, nor with the French, whom he knew to be hostile to his plan. He decided that he would open up the Sea of Marmora with his fleet alone. The Turkish forts at the neck of the Straits? The artillery of Churchill's fifteen cruisers and battleships would blow them to bits. The channel? His dredgers would clean it out like a swimming pool.

The French fleet would take part, too, in this great nautical junket. Only the Russians, smelling Greeks everywhere, and at bottom distrustful of this British plan, refused to participate. Yet, the prize having been promised to them, they more than anyone else should have been interested in the project's success. Churchill was so enthusiastic that Lord Kitchener, though not convinced, finally agreed like everyone else, but with an odd reservation: "One of the merits of the plan is that if it doesn't meet expectations, it will be possible to break off the attack." Churchill, a cigar in his fist like the lance of Patroclus, sounded the call to action on March 18, 1915. Under the command of Admiral Carden, the magnificent British fleet, augmented by French ships, fell into line at the entrance to the Straits. The Turkish batteries, camouflaged on the nearest hills, were soon silenced. The Turks' German advisers had planned the defense very well, however. The shores were sown with traps and the water with mines. The big Allied warships hit them one after the other, and each one sent a thousand or two thousand sailors to the bottom. Breaking through was impossible. It was a Trafalgar in reverse. The bombardment continued for five days. A number of Turkish batteries were destroyed, but since no landing forces accompanied the expedition, it was without success. The German and Turkish losses were insignificant, 200 men in all, while strewn in every direction were the bodies of thousands of Allied sailors, floating like buoys in the shining seas. Without landing troops, it was useless to try again to pass through the channel. Each attempt meant sending cruisers and destroyers to the bottom, their admirable crews standing at attention at the moment of their death. Churchill had showed himself nothing but a braggart, and a gravedigger of English and Scottish sailors. It was necessary to withdraw, albeit painfully and with difficulty. A third of the

expedition's men and some of his Majesty's finest warships lay strewn about the bottom of the Dardanelles forever.

This disaster inflicted on her fleet by a few Germans and Turks was intolerable to the pride of Britannia, ruler of the waves. It had to be answered. What had been lacking was support from ground forces. Therefore, despite all Churchill's promises that the fleet alone could clear the sea, an expeditionary corps was mounted, with the task of pinning down the Turks along the Hellespont. As always with Churchill, it was begun in an improvised fashion. There had been no careful preparation by the combined staffs. Thirty thousand men were to be landed in confusion; and it was they who would be pinned down, not the Turks, whom the German tacticians maneuvered in masterly fashion. The luckless French and English soldiers on the beaches died of thirst, shot, shell, and then typhus. They had to be reinforced: five new divisions were landed on the scorching sands at the foot of the enemy fortifications, where they in turn were cut to pieces by high-angle fire. In London, generals and admirals hurled abuse at each other. A cabinet crisis ensued. The Allied soldiers on the Straits were at death's door, and again new divisions were sent in piecemeal. Thousands of Australians were thrown into the breach. Like the French in the Belgian Ardennes in August 1914, the Allies did not even have good maps of the region. There were no hospital ships, even though a whole army lay dying under the torrid sun without food or supplies. Troops were landed and landed again, only to be decimated each time. Nearly half a million men would follow one another to that hellish shore: 145,000 would be killed or wounded there. The survivors, heartsick to the point of nausea, could be thrown back into the sea by the Germans and Turks at any time. It was even decided in London to divert and recall the relief convoys, including the clothing sent to withstand the winter. Three weeks later the cold and snow swept down on the unfortunates: two hundred died of the cold; five thousand had their feet frozen. It was one of the great tragedies of the war. After the Somme, Artois, and Champagne, in 1915 yet another dreadful disaster for the Allies. Churchill extricated himself by having himself sent on a staff mission to France, where he was tolerated for only six months. As for the expeditionary force, it was impossible to bring back from the Dardanelles the defeated troops, who, ravaged by typhus, were skeletal. One had to save face. Salvation was Salonika, a large Greek port, hence neutral. Allegedly the British had entered the war on August 4, 1914 because of the violation of Belgian neutrality. Greece was as neutral in 1915 as Belgium had been the previous year. She was nonetheless to be violated in her turn. Such was the "War of Right." In August, 1915, despite the protest of the king of Greece, Constantine I, the Allies landed with their rifles, their cannon, and their dying on the "neutral" docks of Salonika.

CHAPTER XXII

Chapter 22

Italy Joins the Fray

Even before Salonika, grimacing War had dragged Italy into its dance of death. Did the Italian people want it? The historical evidence available today enables one to answer with a flat no. Even Mussolini, who was the Allies' outstanding supporter in Italy in 1915, had taken a stand against any participation in the conflict at its outset. "Down with war! The time has come for the Italian proletariat to keep faith with the old watchword: not a man, not a cent." The extremist of 1914 would a little later become one of the most severely wounded soldiers of the Italian campaign, hit by dozens of shrapnel fragments. With the formation of the Triple Alliance (Germany-Austria-Turkey), it had been thought that Italy would be persuaded to enter the war on the side of the Alliance, to whom she was bound by treaty. But in 1914, as again in 1939, Italy, the land of Macchiavelli - i.e., sensibly perspicacious - cared little for pretty sentiments, which often camouflaged cold calculation, and didn't pretend to be overly troubled by problems of conscience. What problems? The others had hardly been troubled by them in 1914. Wasn't it strictly its own self-interest that had prompted the Russian government to convert the Balkans into a shield? Was it not strictly in their own interest that the French politicians had made such use of the Russian cannon-fodder to regain Alsace-Lorraine? Was the British establishment not motivated by interest when it used the pretext of the violation of Belgium in order to trip up a dangerous naval and business rival? "Right" is rouge that is put on for effect. Why should not self-interest, the law of nations, have been the barometer of the Italians as well? In international parleys Italian politicians have no equals for maneuvering, protesting loudly, becoming indignant, throwing their arms in the air, and all but crying, as if the other negotiators were strangling them and murdering them. Comedy or tragedy, they play both roles to the hilt.

When the Italian government declared its neutrality on August 3, 1914, it was motivated by just one idea: to cash in on that neutrality. Not to let anyone play on its sympathies, but to see which side would offer the most. Salandra,

president of the Italian council, didn't mince words. He automatically put aside "every preoccupation, every preconceived notion that was not exclusively inspired by the exclusive and unlimited devotion to the fatherland, by the sacred interest of Italy" (October 16, 1914). But at the end of the autumn of 1914, what was the "egoistically sacred" and "exclusive" interest of that delightful country? To achieve its interest, was it absolutely necessary to take up arms in favor of one of the sides? "I believe," sagely declared Giolitti, former president and a liberal in temperament, "that under the present conditions in Europe, we might obtain something appreciable without war." That "something appreciable" was the Italian Trentino. The sons of Romulus and Remus had the teeth of a she-wolf, like their patroness of twenty-five hundred years before. Many remembered ancient Rome, mistress of the world. Some of them, like Gabriele d'Annunzio, dreamed theatrically of a grandiose immolation of the Italians: "They will have to suffer resplendent blood letting, to soothe a radiant grief!" The Italian Trentino was a reasonable demand. For people of the same race and blood to be reunited was just as sound. Overdoing it and swallowing up foreign peoples against their will, on the other hand, was in keeping neither with the "Right" so highly praised, nor perhaps even with wisdom. Many are the nations in history that have suffered from an indigestion of alien peoples. What would be Italy's choice?

And what was Vienna going to offer? At the outset, the Austrian government had dragged its feet. Then Franz Josef warmed up to the idea of turning over the foothills of the Southern Tyrol to Italy. Austria was even disposed to let her port of Trieste be turned into an independent state. As for Albania and the Turkish islands of the Dodecanese, Austria would give the Italians carte blanche. Without firing a single shot, Italy was thus able to make not merely appreciable but considerable gains. To obtain the Austrians' cooperation, Wilhelm II, who had no wish to see another enemy fall upon him, brought great pressure to bear on Vienna. He sent his former chancellor, Prince von Bülow, as a special plenipotentiary to Rome. Von Bülow was an Italophile and an Austrophobe, and the intimate friend, as was his wife, of the Italian Queen Mother. Until the last week of his stay, that is to say until May 21, 1915, he tactfully endeavored to keep Italy at peace, while striving to satisfy her territorial demands. On May 9, 1915, Prince von Bülow, accompanied by the ambassador of Austria-Hungary himself, confidentially presented the Italian government with the following note: "Austria-Hungary is prepared to cede that part of the Tyrol inhabited by Italians, Gradisca, and the west bank of the Isonzo insofar as it is Italian; Trieste is to become a free city within the Austro-Hungarian empire, with an Italian university and town council. Austria recognizes Italian sovereignty over Valona and states that she has no political interest in Albania." "Fatte presto [hurry it up]," King Victor Emmanuel told von Bülow on several occasions when this very important offer was finally delivered to him. But without its being known in the embassies, the irretrievable had already taken place. Two weeks earlier, on April 24, 1915, Italy had come to a secret understanding with the Allies in London. Victor Emmanuel had kept up appearances. When von Bülow had

come to deliver to him personally a letter from William II ardently imploring him to remain faithful to their friendship and their treaty, the king of Italy had spoken of his duties vis-à-vis public opinion, the majority of the country, and the parliament. In fact, no party in Rome had a majority in the spring of 1915. Only the common people, heavily subjected to Allied propaganda, had made clear their feelings. The Italian minister of the interior himself had clearly recognized it: "If there were a plebiscite, the majority would vote against war." Giolitti, who was also against the war, had received the support of a large majority of the deputies: 320 out of 508. In a gesture absolutely unprecedented in a parliamentary government, those 320 deputies had come one by one to deliver their calling cards to the personal residence of the head of the neutralist party, in order to signify their refusal to side with the Allies. Salandra, the prime minister, felt himself so repudiated that he resigned. The labor unions, for their part, were massively opposed to entering the war. As for the people themselves, in reality they could hardly manifest their will democratically, because in 1915, seventy-eight per cent of the Italians still did not have the right to vote. At that time, an Italian had to possess a school diploma in order to vote. Thus less than a fourth of the citizens were voters.

How, then, was Italy's entry into the war brought about? With the help of street riots carried to the point of direct violence, fomented by bands of guerrifondigi [warmongers] who, by a wholesale breaking of windows, had forced their way into the Italian parliament to cries of "Viva la guerra!" Allied funds, principally French, had been distributed in Rome with extreme generosity. The newspapers, showered with subsidies even more openly than the warmongering French press of 1914, had whipped up public feelings. Mussolini had founded a newspaper that was destined to become famous: II Popolo d'Italia. The future fascist leader had made it an inflammatory sheet, exciting both a fury for war among his socialist readers and patriotism among the irredentists who dreamed of replanting the old fasces on a maximum of the lands of the old Roman empire. D'Annunzio, with a bald skull atop an overexcited brain, and his lyre in hand, provided the epic tone. This warmongering movement also enjoyed the extremely active support of Freemasonry. All these interventionists combined constituted no more than a minority, but they raised a din like the geese of the Roman capitol of old. No one else could be heard. They took to the streets, screamed, created havoc. Victor Emmanuel, frightened by the broken windowpanes of the parliament building, refused Salandra's resignation.

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Salandra played only a modest role in this whole affair. He was a mediocre politician without any real power. The real wirepuller was a very bizarre Italian named Sonnino: a Jew born in Lebanon of a Jewish father and a Welsh mother. Another strange characteristic: his mother had made a Protestant of him, quite surprising in a country where almost everyone was a Catholic. Jew, Levantine, Protestant, half-Welsh, Sonnino would be the standard-bearer of internationalist Italy. The Austrian offer, however, offered the Italians considerable territorial advantages on a golden platter, and without a single one of their soldiers having

to suffer a scratch. It was presented rather reluctantly, moreover, by the Austrians, who complained, not without reason, at the blackmail, but who, at the imperative urging of William II, had to resign themselves to yielding. Giolitti had asked "parecchio" (plenty). In the end, Italy was going to come away with all of the South Tyrol and an autonomous Trieste, as well as recognition of her freedom of action in Albania and the Dodecanese, without giving up a single lira or shedding a drop of blood. "Italy is following a policy of blackmail against us that has no parallel in history," Bethmann-Hollweg moaned, all the while he was giving in to it. But they were at an auction sale. Sonnino would sell Italy to the highest bidder. The Italian people, inflamed by the Allied propaganda, gave no thought to the possible cost of this foreign largesse. For the Allies were offering everything: the Italian Trentino most certainly, but the German Trentino as well, which would mean that hundreds of thousands of non- Italians would be absorbed by a foreign land without their consent. That, of course, was strictly contrary to the principle of self-determination for which the French and British politicians later claimed to be fighting.

The people living along the shores of the Adriatic, similarly offered to Italy by the Allies, were to suffer the same violation of their "right." Who asked the opinion of the inhabitants not only of Istria, but of Dalmatia? Of Albania? Of the entire string of coastal islands? They numbered in the millions, these largely Slavic and Albanian peoples whom the Allies were ready, out of self-interest, to turn into Italian citizens. It was for many of these South Slays that the assassins of Sarajevo had unleashed the great European carnage on June 28, 1914. It was to assure a Slavic expansion as far as the Dalmatian ports in question that Russia's Pan-Slavists had begun the military phase of the war. Now these territories were to be given to the Italians on the pretext that some emperor or other had had his villa there two thousand years ago, and that some thousands of Italian fishermen and shopkeepers had gone ashore one day and taken residence there. But why, in that case, not promise Lyon, the native city of the Emperor Claudius, to Italy as well? Or Seville, the birthplace of the Emperor Trajan? Or even Paris, the ancient Roman Lutetia? And what of London, which Caesar had conquered?

Russia, for her part, wanted no part of such an award of Balkan territory to Italy. Her leaders opposed it with all their might. But the front was collapsing, and Grand Duke Nicholas feared imminent disaster. So Russia had to accept it for the time being. In fact, however, she was determined to sabotage the Allied offer and nullify it at the first opportunity. And that was how it turned out. The Serbians, in 1919, would be the big winners in the Balkans. The Allies' promises, despite the treaties duly signed, were thus empty, a fundamentally immoral game that made a caricature out of the so edifying declarations made by the "defenders of Right" in 1914.

What is left to add about the territories in Asia Minor that the Allies offered to Sonnino as extra booty? The Italians had demanded, in addition to the shores of the Adriatic and the German Brenner pass, that they be granted Cilicia, Southeast Anatolia, Southern Cappadocia, and the region of Smyrna as an

Asian gift. But the Greeks, when the Allies were begging for their intervention the following year, would surely demand in their turn similar annexations in Turkey! Likewise the Russians, who had entered the auction room first, on August 1, 1914. For their part, the British and French had already secretly chosen the morsels they would cut from the Turkish spoils for themselves. To the Arabs, finally, in order to entice them into the caravan of death, camels in the lead, the British in great secrecy had promised that the territories they inhabited would be converted into Arab states. Thus the same booty in the same area had been promised three, four, and five times. And by what right? All the inhabitants were Turkish subjects, i.e. were non-Europeans. Had they been consulted? Were they, the ones primarily concerned, willing to be auctioned off like chattels? Did they even have the slightest idea of these barter-treaties concluded behind their backs? It was of no importance to the politicians. They were sold to the Italians, or more precisely to Sonnino, who, through his father, had a bit of the Levant in him. In order to cement the deal, the Allies committed themselves to grant him even more territory, because, of course, they planned to snap up and divide the German colonies in Africa, Asia, and Oceania. To bring Italy into the war, they would have promised Vancouver and Valparaiso to Sonnino if he had wanted them.

These treacherous dealings would result in appalling disputes after the war. In 1918 and 1919, Clemenceau would heap insults upon Italy. But in 1915, Italy had to be seduced at any price, especially if the price could be paid by others. The Allies, if they wished to crush Germany, had an absolute need of another one or two million soldiers and a new battlefront, in order to take the pressure off the paralyzed western front, and to save Russia, whom the Austrians and Germans had by the throat, from utter disaster. Thus, on April 26, 1915, was signed the secret Italo-Allied treaty, would be known to history as the Treaty of London. Italy pledged to declare war within a month. On May 21, 1915, it was done. In the course of the first weeks the Italians advanced to the Isonzo and then, in October 1915, to Lake Garda. They were able to enjoy a few local successes after that. But they were poorly armed and poorly commanded. At Caporetto they would suffer a crushing reverse. They would even be hurled back beyond the Piave. "But they're fleeing, my lions!," Marshal Cardona would cry. French units would have to rush to the rescue. In the end, instead of being aided by the Italians, the Allies would be forced to aid the Italians. In a word, they had violated the most elementary rights of peoples in the Treaty of London of April 26, 1915, only to embroil themselves in new complications, military complications that would quickly be followed by nationalistic animosities. The Italians would no longer be able to stand the French. The French, in turn, would hate the Italians. The intervention of Italy in the war in 1915 had no more effect than a sword thrust into water, or rather into a mire of blood. An evil business from the start, it turned into a military disappointment. The Allies gained nothing, and it cost Italy the blood of her people. For a long time the Italians would detest the French and the British. Out of that great blighted hope, Fascism would be born.

CHAPTER XXIII

CHAPTER XXIII

More Balkan Intrigue

Italy's entry into the war was no more than a small beginning. After Italy, some twenty other countries would be snared in the traps set out by Messrs. Poincaré and Asquith. Meanwhile, the Germans and the Austrians, on their guard, had won over another Balkan country, Bulgaria. Bulgaria's strategic position was important. If she entered on the side of the Germans, she would immediately assure them and the Austrians contact with their new allies, the Turks. On the other hand, if she swung to the side of the Allies, she could be the decisive base for the offensive of the Russians against Constantinople, their chief objective. She could form a geographical link for the armies of the tsar with those of Serbia, their satellite in the Balkans. The idea of having an additional adversary, one the size of Bulgaria at their throat was bound to cause enormous worry to the Russians, who had been somewhat relieved by Italy's entry into the war. Bulgaria was thus, for friends and enemies alike, a country whose collaboration seemed essential. Bulgaria's leaders knew it. In August 1914 the country at first stayed quietly in its corner. Officially Bulgaria remained neutral - it was a time to see who would offer the most. Just as Sonnino had done on behalf of Italy and as the Romanians, who would be the last to decide, would do! The Bulgarians coldly calculated the advantages offered them by the rival bidders. They felt themselves to be Slays. But they also had the blood of Mongols and Turks in their veins; and crossbred as they were with Greeks and even Germans, they were now for Constantinople and now against her. One of their kings had married the daughter of the Byzantine emperor, but then again, Basil II, called the "killer of Bulgarians," had taken 15,000 of them prisoners and pulled out their eyes as casually as if he were going through their pockets, 900 years before. And Bulgars have long memories.

In October of 1912, Hartwig, the Russian ambassador in Belgrade, had organized the first Balkan war. He had launched the Greeks, the Montenegrins, the Serbs, and the Bulgarians in an assault on the decrepit Turks. The Bulgarians flattened the Turks at Kirk-Kilisse, at Lule Burgas, and finally at Adrianople. They approached the minarets of Constantinople. That was too much for the tsar of Russia. King Ferdinand of Bulgaria was not an unpretentious person. Just like his great patron in St. Petersburg, he dreamed of capturing the capital of the Bosphorus and of proclaiming himself emperor there. Of course that wouldn't do at all for the tsar. Constantinople was a Russian monopoly, a fief that the tsar had reserved for himself. The Serbians, too, were seized by jealousy to see that there were now two strong countries in the Balkans, when they definitely intended that there should never be more than one: their own. The result was the Treaty of London in May 1913, which legalized Bulgaria's conquests. It had hardly been signed when the second Balkan war broke out in June, the following month. All the peoples between the Danube and the Aegean Seas had been whipped up by the Russian government, and they fell on ambitious

Bulgaria tooth and nail. The Romanians, the Greeks, the Montenegrins, the Serbs, descended upon Bulgaria. Even the Turks, who had been the common enemy a year earlier, joined in. The Bulgarians were easily defeated. In August 1913, the Treaty of Bucharest stripped them nearly to the skin: in the west, the Serbians took Macedonia; the Romanians took Dobrudja from Bulgaria in the north; and in the south the Bulgarians had to surrender to the Turks Adrianople, the Hadrianopolis of two thousand years ago, founded by Hadrian, the native of Seville who had become emperor of Rome. After that beating, Bulgaria, however completely Slav she might be, no longer harbored feelings of solidarity, but rather enmity, towards the Serbians, who had wasted no time carrying out frightful massacres of the Macedonians, no sooner than they had been wrested from their union with the Bulgarians. As for the Russian leaders, they had allowed Bulgaria to be nearly annihilated to assure their own claims on Constantinople, Bulgaria no longer saw them as protectors but as dangerous enemies.

The British and French governments wished to block without fail an alliance of Germany and Turkey, which would unite their enemies from the border of Denmark clear to the heart of Asia Minor, where British interests were dominant.

Winning over Bulgaria appealed to everybody because she had become militarily strong: the nation had at its disposal half a million soldiers who were generally known to be very good fighters. To convince Bulgaria, however, the Allies would have to guarantee absolutely the restitution of the regions that the Romanians and the Serbians had taken the year before. The French politicians favored this approach: it was easier to give away what belonged to others. Macedonia was not Alsace. With France, then, Bulgaria could easily come to an agreement - at the expense of her neighbors, as we learn from the confidential telegram of the French embassy in Bulgaria, dated November 19, 1914 (No. 99 of the archives of the ministry of foreign affairs in Paris): Bulgaria is ready to grant us her complete assistance in exchange for guaranteeing her the acquisition of Thrace as far as the Enos-Midia line and the return of all the Macedonian regions, possession of which had been promised her by the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty of 13 March 1912. By any reckoning, those restitutions cost the French less than a bottle of Calvados. But the Serbians? And the Romanians? And the Russians? The Russian government demanded Constantinople as their chief war compensation which Bulgaria also coveted. The interests of the Bulgarians and the Russians were in absolute conflict. On the other hand, the Serbians were unconditional supporters of the Russians. They were the battering ram the Pan-Slays meant to drive into the southern flank of the Austrians. It was thanks to the Serbians and partially for the Serbians that the Russians, after the double crime of Sarajevo, triggered the European war. How could they dismantle the Serbian bastion for the benefit of the Bulgarians, their direct rivals on the Bosphorus?

No matter. The Russian Pan-Slays could no longer afford the luxury of playing swashbucklers. They were in dire straits. The Germans had trounced them

severely. Their commander-in-chief, Grand Duke Nicholas, feeling lost, clamored for the intervention of other countries, Italy to start with, as we have seen. His minister of war was sending him scarcely a quarter of the artillery shells his batteries at the front needed if they were to avoid annihilation. "I ask for trainloads of ammunition and they send me trainloads of priests," the grand duke sneered. He would plainly prefer the Bulgarians to the priests. But Sazonov blocked everything: "At a pinch he would accept some partial retrocessions in Macedonia," telegraphed Ambassador Paléologue, who remained very cautious. "M. Sazonov had just put forth some other diplomatic plans." Promising King Ferdinand "some partial retrocessions" was not very much, especially since the Germans were in a position to promise a good deal more. It wouldn't cost them a pfennig to offer the Bulgarians the return of so oft partitioned Macedonia. Paris, impatient, prodded the Russians mercilessly. The Russian Pan- Slays decided to make the Bulgarians an offer, "subject to acceptance by the Serbians." It was plain that the Serbian answer would be no. Old Pashich hadn't covered up the Sarajevo killings and provoked the war of 1914 just to go soft for the benefit of his enemy of 1913. At the beginning of the negotiations of August 10, 1914, he had telegraphed his embassy in Paris: "Serbia didn't go to war three times in the last two years to bring about consequences which would make Bulgaria the dominant power in the Balkans. She prefers anything to such a humiliation." Months went by and Bulgaria, despite everything, remained fairly well disposed to the Entente. But how to convince the stubborn Serbians? France and Russia made a joint representation to Pashich. The only answer they would receive was a flat refusal: "Not one centimeter of Macedonia will become Bulgarian so long as I can prevent it."

In these negotiations Russia played a strange role. She let the Serbs know that she was not a participant in the French demarche, and that though "constrained and forced into it, in reality she disapproved the granting of any concession to the Bulgarians." If the tsarist clique paid lip service to it today, tomorrow it would do its best to destroy the agreement. On March 4, 1915 the tsar declared to his minister of war: "My decision is made: Thrace and the city of Constantinople must be incorporated into the empire." (telegram from Paléologue, No. 361) Paris multiplied her promises in vain. The French swore that what Serbia abandoned in Macedonia she would recover a hundred times over on the Adriatic, the same gift Paris was offering to the Italians! The Serbs, sly and mistrustful, did not wish to consider concessions to Bulgaria until after they had wrested from Austria all the booty they were demanding. "No concession to Bulgaria relative to Macedonia will ever be considered by us before we have achieved the sum total of our aspirations at Austria's expense." (Pashich December 23, 1914) It was useless, therefore, for the Allies to prolong a discussin that was falling on deaf ears. "To insist would be to risk offending Serbia with no chance of success." (Poincaré, L'Invasion, p. 514) The verbosity of the Serbians would grow ever more extravagant. They would grandiloquently propose to charge right through the territory of the troublesome Bulgarians.

"We are prepared," Pashich asserted, "to occupy Bulgarian territory and thus

destroy the military forces of Sofia." When some months later Pashich found himself with his backside in the waters of the Adriatic, it would be because he had asked for it.

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Having been thus spurned, it was inevitable that the Bulgarians would side with the Germans. On August 1, 1915, Colonel Gantscher brought the Bulgarians everything they had lost and more besides. They even saw to it that there was liberal bribery in Sofia, because the Balkan negotiators, as we know, always waged the noble "war of Right" with purer hearts when it was paid for in cold cash. The Bulgarian finance minister, M. Tuchev, had already accepted, with eyes half-closed, a little Berlin gratuity of four million gold marks. This very important leader helped the Germans relieve themselves of a bit of their financial surplus. Such little gifts aided comprehension. The Germans and Bulgarians understood each other better and better. The pleasant comedy of neutrality went on for another month. At the end of September 1915, the German Marshal von Mackensen, a Death's Head Hussar - whose high black kepi with skull and plumes still occupied a place of honor at his estate in the neighborhood of Stettin from which, in April 1945, I directed our battle for the Oder - mustered ten splendid German divisions south of the Danube. They would be supported by four Austro-Hungarian divisions. The vise was closing. Could the Allies not see it?

On the Austrian front, the Italian intervention had only led to mediocre results. It had been necessary to transfer only two Austro-Hungarian divisions from the Galician front to the defense of the mountains of the Tyrol. The Italians had 312 battalions at their disposal, the Austrians 147. Nevertheless, Austrian losses were limited to a few villages and a few support points. Grand Duke Nicholas, who had counted on the avalanche of 37 Italian divisions to greatly relieve his front, found himself in a worse state than ever. The Russian front had been penetrated at Görlitz on May 4, 1915, and driven back to the San. The following month, the line of the San and also that of the Dniester were overrun. On June 22, 1915 Lemberg fell. In July followed a new defeat, the capture of Warsaw in Russian Poland. In August, the Nieman line was broken: the Germans reached the Berezina, site of NapoLéon's brilliant salvation of his retreating army. Pro-Allied historian Renouvin sums it up: "The results of the campaign were grave. The Russian armies had abandoned all of Galicia, all of Poland, all of Lithuania. At the center of the front, their retreat exceeded one hundred and fifty kilometers. They had suffered enormous losses from May to October: 151,000 killed, 683,000 wounded, and 895,000 taken prisoner - that is, nearly half of the combat effectives." (La Crise européenne, p. 311) Millions of useless conscripts vegetated in the rear depots, "rough louts" who could not even be trained because no rifles were available. In such circumstances, could Russia afford Bulgaria as an additional enemy?

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The Western Allies hadn't accomplished much more. In Artois, despite the fact

that they massed 29 Anglo-French divisions against 13 German divisions, and in Champagne, where 39 French infantry divisions faced 17 divisions of the Reich, they had suffered a cruel defeat: almost twice as many dead as the Germans (250,000 against 140,000) for virtually nothing. Joffre himself had been forced to announce on October 7, 1915 "a protracted posture of defensive operations." The Anglo-French disaster at the Dardanelles and the frightful massacre of the Allied troops at Gallipoli at the end of 1915 had made it necessary to find a refuge for the survivors at Salonika. Greek neutrality was violated when the British set up a puppet leader, Venizelos, a cunning Cretan. Things were going from bad to worse for the Allies. The British were making one last official effort to try to hold the Bulgarians to their former neutrality. They had offered the Bulgarians Macedonia as a war bonus, without the knowledge of their Serbian allies, exactly the way French politicians, in August 1939, would secretly concede to the Soviets the right of passage through Poland, when the latter country was categorically opposed to it. To support his proposal, the British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, in a speech to the House of Commons, embarked on an astonishing encomium of the Bulgarians. It was October 1, 1915. The Russians were engaged in an operation that was diametrically opposed. After keeping the Allies in the dark up to the last moment, on their own initiative they presented the Bulgarians with an ultimatum, demanding that they break off diplomatic relations with the Germans, an indication of how sincere was the understanding between the Anglo-French and the Russians. One said white, and the other did black. Nothing remained for King Ferdinand of Bulgaria but to send the tsar of Russia back to his prayers. On October 6, 1915 Mackensen and the Bulgarians attacked Serbia: 300,000 soldiers in all, more than half of them Germans.

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The 250,000 Serbians, so provocative in 1914, when they had only the unprepared Austrians to face, panicked at the onslaught of the Germans. They appealed for French and British aid, but their allies would not send them so much as a handful of infantrymen. Belgrade fell the first day. Thereafter the Serbians fled towards the Adriatic. It was only after a month of unbroken rout that the Allies decided to send General Sarrail from Salonika with 80,000 British and French troops towards the last Serbian valley, almost on the border of Greece; but they didn't put to flight so much as a single Macedonian partridge. They became bogged down, then were pushed back. The routed Serbian army was unable to join up with them. The Serbs didn't reach the Adriatic and the famous Albanian coasts that had been promised to everybody until mid-December. Devoured by typhus, the Serbs no longer had either munitions or supplies. "Leba! leba!" ("Bread! Bread!"), they cried on approaching every hamlet. With them rode the old king, Peter II, in a vehicle drawn by buffaloes. Everywhere they left behind emaciated cadavers. The Italians, who had occupied Valona, drove the last survivors towards the mountains of Greece, because, for a second time, Greek territory had been violated by the Allies at Corfu. There they left Pashich shaking in his beard and already about to betray them.

The miserable old fox would soon send emissaries to Switzerland to begin negotiations with the new Austro- Hungarian emperor, Charles I, and obtain pardon for the Sarajevo double assassination. As a sign of his good faith, he would have the organizer of the crime, Colonel Dimitrievich, shot as a scapegoat. The forces of the Entente would again attempt a Serbian rescue operation in the region of Dedeagach. There they would be almost surrounded by the Bulgarians. Germany now crossed the vast area between Berlin and Constantinople at will. Her specialists reinforced the Turkish troops on the Near Eastern battlefield clear to the threshold of the Suez Canal. It was there, hard by the Red Sea, that the British would now try recruiting new candidates for death - this time among the Arabs. Except for the Rumanians, who were delaying their decision, everyone in Europe who could be sent into the fire had already been tossed into the frying pan. Millions of additional soldiers were needed, workers as well. The time had come to recruit foreigners en masse.

CHAPTER XXIV

Cannon Fodder from the Colonies

An enormous flood of humanity, equal in numbers to the French and British armies of 1914 (2,300,000 men in the month of October 1914) was about to pour out onto all the battlefields of the Allies, from Africa, from Asia, and from Oceania. The gleam of their countenances, yellow, copper, black, would be reflected on all the seas of the world. Not even included in these droves were the considerable armies raised in Canada, in Australia, in South Africa, etc., often with the descendants of conquered French, Irish forced laborers, and dispossessed Boers. The Boers, descendants of Dutchmen and French Huguenots, comprised half of South Africa's population. Canada's people included several million descendants of old French settlers. Australia had been built with the blood and sweat of Irish people forcibly brought by the British. They may have been European but had nothing to do with continental quarrels and the political machinations of the very British who had oppressed them. What New Zealander, indeed, could have said in July 1914 whether Sarajevo was a Balkan first name or a brand of Russian caviar? And Mulhouse? And Strasbourg? What Boer from Pretoria, what Australian Irishman could have explained why those towns should be German rather than French, or French rather than German? Sending them to die by the tens of thousands in the stinking mud of Artois was already morally indefensible. But what of the Senegalese? Or the Blacks turned gray with cold in the chalky trenches of Champagne, and the Malagasies transported like livestock by sea for a month or longer in order to be cast, stupefied, into the barbed wire entanglements of the Chemin des Dames - what about them? What could they understand of the war? What could a German possibly mean to them? And in what way was he different from a Frenchman? Why was he ordered to kill the one rather than the other? And above all, why must he be killed for them? How many of them died? A hundred thousand? Two hundred thousand? Who bothered to count? To put those 850,000 luckless wretches through four years of carnage was an abominable genocide, all the more odious in that the ones who recruited all this colored cannon fodder pretended to be

their defenders. In the recruitment of coloreds, the British Establishment had beaten all known records, siphoning off more than a million Hindus towards their battlefields - or, more precisely, towards the satisfaction of their interests. Exactly one million one hundred thousand. Destitute men recruited in their arid land with tremendous doses of crude and varied propaganda. Men who wouldn't kill a skinny cow, nor even a fly, were blindly going out to get themselves killed by the hundreds of thousands. Anywhere there was a penny belonging to His Majesty, or a barrel of British oil, or a leak in the maritime monopoly imposed on the world by London, these poor devils in their knee-breeches, speaking eight hundred different languages and marching behind a British swager stick, would he used ruthlessly.

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The Hindus, thrown in great numbers onto unknown battlefields, and the colored subjects of the French colonies, had rapidly been followed by other masses of humanity. Noncombatant workers were brought to the factories of France and the United Kingdom to turn out millions of artillery shells, which the Western Allies scattered over their battlefronts in a rain of death. These workers had been rounded up in the colonies: for example, the future Ho Chi Minh was brought in from Tonkin. A great many others had been recruited in China: for example, the future Chou En-Lai. In all three, million non-Europeans, for whom the quarrels of Europe were as indecipherable as Sanskrit to an Andalusian vinegrower, were brought to swell the ranks of Europe's armies and workers.

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Senegal, Madagascar, Tonkin, India, and China had not been sufficient for Europe's needs. As early as 1915 it had been necessary to bring the Arabs as well into the ranks of the British. The Muslims had then been promised the reward of the Crescent, that is, a great independent Arab kingdom from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf, if they joined up with the Allies, and especially with the British troops. The Arabs could be either very dangerous or eminently useful. Turkey, on the side of the Germans since 1914, was the keystone of Islam. The caliph of Istanbul was its spiritual leader. The Turkish empire stretched from Thrace and the Bosphorus to the approaches of Egypt. Tens of millions of Arabs were united with Constantinople in the same active and passionate faith. Even beyond the Near East, the spiritual influence of Turkey extended to the most distant colonies of the British Empire, especially to the Indies, where there were more than a hundred million devout Muslims. If the British diplomacy proved to be clumsy, the rulers of the Empire could anticipate dangerous agitation, insurrections, and revolts fomented in the very heart of their empire. An "Islamic holy war" would do them more harm than a hundred thousand German combatants on the western front. To gain an alliance with those hundreds of millions of Muslims (two hundred and fifty million then, eight hundred million today) and most especially with those who lived in the bosom of the Turkish empire, was therefore of the utmost military and economic interest to the British. The extraction of petroleum - the blood of the modern world - was

undergoing an ever greater development in those countries, where it constituted a sort of private preserve of British interests.

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As early as 1915 some particularly clear-headed British agents attempted to bring off an agreement with the Arabs. The Arab chiefs who exercised politico-religious power in the torrid lands of Arabia, Syria, and Mesopotamia were nomads first and foremost, without much political importance. They prayed to Mecca and traveled from oasis to oasis on their camels. They lived frugally, eating in those days less caviar and paté de foie gras than dates. In 1915 they were poor and doubtless happier in their deserts than they would subsequently be in their caramel-colored palaces in Monte Carlo, Geneva, California, and Marbella, or in their gold-plated Mercedes at two million dollars apiece. The game of tempting those hardy warriors who lived only for their faith, was made easier by the fact that the British had a man on the scene throughout the war, a clever political representative, T.E. Lawrence, who was discreet, realistic and possessed imagination: he was like a skinny Churchill without the cigar and the cognac. He had been a pupil in France of the Jesuits, the best teachers in the world. Dry as a camel's tail, Lawrence had lived for years among the tribes of the Near East, worming his way into the hearts of the Bedouins, sharing their lives, their dates, their tents, and even homosexual relations with some of them. To hear him tell it and to see him dig up piles of stones, he was an archeologist. In reality he was a British spy. He had learned all the Arab dialects and lived as frugally as a camel- driver. He would become the great man of Anglo-Arab fraternization: he probably believed in that in all honesty, because in his own way he was a paladin. He would later renounce all honors and official duties when he saw that Britain had hoodwinked his proteges. Returning to England in disgust, he would die there in a highly suspicious motorcycle accident.

In 1916 the plan was definite: Lawrence was going to tip Turkish Arabia into the British camp. Throughout 1915 there had been great danger. The only possibility that presented itself to the British at that time was the Arab region of Hejaz, bordering the Red Sea, an area that was infertile and sparsely populated. Its coast was inhospitable, dominated by the winds of the desert and the burning sun. But in the matter of religion, it was of decisive importance. Its capital was Mecca, the millennial town of the prophet, the religious center of the Muslims. The second town of Hejaz, almost equally famous, was Medina. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims came to Mecca each year. It offered an exceptional opportunity for a propaganda coup. The emir who ruled the Bedouins of Hejaz, if he took a stand against Constantinople, would be able to transform the conditions of the Anglo-Turkish conflict completely. He was named Hussein. He wasn't very rich, and a few felicitous subsidies facilitated the initial British contacts. The money wasn't everything, however. The Arabs were by nature quick to take offense; independence was their life. They had always lived free in their deserts, cleaving to the sand and the wind. They had once possessed one of the greatest empires in the world, from the Ganges to Narbonne. Cordova had sheltered one of their most marvelous mosques; Sicily, their most elegant

court. The memory of that great past hovered in the mind of every Arab like the perfume of a secret and everlasting vine of jasmine. The Colonial Office did its best to court the Emir Hussein. On June 15, the British promised him in writing the reconstitution of a great unified Arab state as soon as the Turks had been vanquished with the collaboration of the Muslims. At the time, the British were generous in fixing the boundaries of the future state. It was no small country: from Mecca to Damascus, from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf. Under those conditions, the military alliance was worth a try. Sir Henry MacMahon, British high commissioner of the Indies, and Emir Hussein established the nature of that "great Arab kingdom," in an exchange of ten letters. From November 4, 1916 on, Hussein would be considered king of the new free Arabia. The British pledge was categorical, though secret, as was everything the British government signed.

It was almost too beautiful. The Adriatic had already been promised to the Italians by the Treaty of London, which was also secret, whereas in fact that territory had been considered a fief of the Serbo-Russians since the beginning of the war. With an equally imperturbable commercial sense, the British had offered Macedonia to the Bulgarians in 1915, whereas by verbal commitment it belonged to their Serbian ally. In the same fashion, the territories granted and guaranteed to the Arabs in 1916 would be granted and guaranteed by these same Britishers in part to the French and in part to the Italians. Even the Jews would be guaranteed part of the spoils, Palestine, which had already been allotted to the Russians. Moreover, these generous distributors, with the same jealous secrecy, and behind the backs of the Arabs, who were theoretically satisfied, had allocated to themselves the most savory morsels of this same Near East, notably those where petroleum flowed even more bountifully than the milk and honey of the Bible. A sextuple distribution! Each one was carried out on the quiet, with the Greeks ignorant of what had been promised the Italians, the Italians unaware of what had been awarded to the Russians; nor did the Russians know what had been assigned to the French, nor the Arabs what had been promised to the Jews. The British had concluded each agreement without the knowledge of any of the other confederates. That made seven separate competitors and beneficiaries who would collapse screaming when they discovered at the Versailles table in 1919 that there were no less than seven dinner guests invited to eat the same dish at the same time.

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Moreover, the British Establishment had no sooner promised Hussein, the newly-minted monarch, sovereignty over an Arab kingdom three million square kilometers in area (six times the size of France) than on March 9, 1916 they personally secured magnificent possessions for themselves in the same territories. The signatories of that pact, once again a secret one, were the Frenchman, Georges Picot, and the Briton, Sir Mark Sykes, whence the name of the Sykes-Picot treaty. The British, then, magnanimously allotted themselves the petroleum of the Tigris and Euphrates area. The French were awarded the administration of the coasts of Lebanon and a preponderant influence in Syria, so "preponderant"

that it would be established on the day of reckoning in 1919 with cannon fire. Those agreements annihilated the commitment solemnly accorded to Hussein of a "great Arab kingdom," which was thereby deprived of its most important territories. The British would end up by bringing an unexpected wolf into the secret sheepfold: the "Balfour Declaration" of 1917, which the Allies judged indispensable if they wished to obtain the support of Jewish finance and the Jewish press in the United States and force Woodrow Wilson's hand. It would grant the Zionists a "homeland" at the expense of the Arabs and assure to each Jewish immigrant a keg of powder that would work wonders at the proper time.

"This triple play of the Foreign Office," wrote the Belgian historian de Launay, "the starting-point of the contradictions in British policy in the Levant, was to be fraught with consequences." It would be half a century before the Arabs would succeed more or less in unraveling this sextuple web of closely woven threads in which the British, between 1915 and 1918, had imprisoned them from head to foot. Despite the fact that the Arabs made up more than ninety percent of the population of Palestine in 1918, they would never succeed in throwing off the Israeli web woven by Balfour. For the moment, and that was all that interested the British in 1916, the entire Arab world, mounted on their swift camels, brandishing daggers and knives, hurled themselves on the Turks, with Lawrence, who had become the intimate friend of the son of King Hussein, the Emir Feisal, at their side. The latter was a splendid prince, as impressive as a prophet when he appeared, wrapped in his white djellaba and armed with his dagger set with diamonds. He and Lawrence attracted new allies. They didn't lack for pounds sterling: British banknotes for Muslim lives. Thanks to those funds, they acquired confederates, stirred up the tribes, and assembled that desert army that British diplomacy alone would never have succeeded in raising. In addition to cunning and courage, they had physical stamina, those warriors; though eating little, they were always combat-ready, tireless, indefatigable. The Arab people, now often painted as ludicrous revelers, were then noble, loyal, trusting, and hospitable. The United Kingdom used them much and misused them even more. Without them, how far would the British imperialists have gotten in their riding breeches? In the end, poor Feisal would lose out, and would even be driven from Mecca by his Saudi rival, ibn-Saud, another magnificent warrior. But British gold, as it had done in Europe for centuries, paid all rivals indiscriminately in order to get them to kill each other advantageously. Europe was dying due to British duplicity and Arabia was on the point of dying, too. In the fight against the Turks, the Arabs furnished the British with splendid reinforcement troops from 1916 to 1918. When facing the Turks in 1916, the British, just like the French, had seen their big cruisers go to the bottom in the neck of the Sea of Marmora and their soldiers die by the thousands at Gallipoli of misery, cold, and typhus. The route from the Suez Canal to Aleppo was open in 1917 and 1918 only because some tens of thousands of Muslim warriors throughout all of Arabia heroically carried the colors of the hope of the prophet at the end of their lances. Those colors were not exactly the Union Jack! Nor in the course of those battles did one see

shining the six-pointed star that now floats autocratically over Jerusalem! The Allied war of "Right" in Arabia, as elsewhere, was the Cannon Fodder from the Colonies omnipotent war of Force. The Europeans ruined themselves morally in the eyes of foreign peoples, especially the Muslims, by stooping to these base plots, flinging showers of lying promises everywhere, cynically hoping to obtain fraudulent dividends. Sooner or later Europe would pay for this, and see the mirage of too easy swindles vanish in the burning air of those marvelous countries.

CHAPTER XXV

The Slaughter Drags On

Meanwhile, on the battlefront of Western Europe, the gigantic hecatombs of 1915 had not sufficed. The Europeans were going to remedy that by massacring each other more stupidly than ever. At Verdun in 1916, besides a million wounded, 336,000 Germans were killed, as well as 362,000 Frenchmen. Each bled the other white. On February 21, 1916, on the first day alone, the artillery fired more than a million shells, burying thousands of soldiers alive. Along the front there was no longer a spadeful of earth that could still be plowed. One no longer bothered to take the weapons from men who had been buried upright. Photos were taken; one moved on somewhere else.

Somewhere else was Artois, since each commander wished to have an offensive to his credit. Falkenhayn had had his offensive at Verdun. Joffre, almost at the same time, began to prepare his own offensive on the Somme. He knew that only by burying the enemy under hundreds of thousands of shells would he be able to cross whatever remained, if anything did remain. The home front made unprecedented sacrifices. Vietnamese and Chinese machinists worked until they dropped. On the first of July 1916 the bugles sounded the coming victory. The artillery barrage surpassed anything ever seen before: a gun fired every eighteen meters. It was like a forest of steel and resulted in rows on rows of crosses in the cemeteries. Bled white at Verdun, the French were forced to reduce their profligacy in human lives. At first Joffre counted on launching an attack with 42 divisions. Then in March it became necessary to reduce the number to 34; in May, to 32. Even at that, there were a great many colonials among them. On the other hand, the British reinforced their contingents: 26 divisions. Thousands of cannon and hundreds of thousands of exhausted men stretched out across a breadth of thirty kilometers. For six days the artillery inflicted an annihilating fire on the Germans. Then French and English troops were sent to the slaughter. In those days soldiers were still loaded like mules - sixty-five pounds on their backs to engage in hand-to-hand fighting! At the third German line of defense, they collapsed from exhaustion. "The Franco-British," wrote Marc Ferro (La Grande Guerre, p. 150), "did not get past the insignificant villages of Thiepval, Mametz, Combles, and Chaume. They were fighting two against one, but the Germans had carefully constructed underground blockhouses that made their defense in depth invulnerable. The Allied attempts of 20 July, of 3 September, and of 20 September 1916, failed like all the rest."

And the price of these useless battles? The figures were dreadful. By the second day the British Command had already lost forty thousand Englishmen. One might think that would be enough. But no. Attack after attack! Each time throwing away tens of thousands of men. "At the end of the battle," Ferro adds, "the British had lost 419,654 men; the French, 194,451; and the Germans, 650,000." The brief offensive of the Somme had taken more than one million two hundred thousand victims. Two million dead and wounded in only two battles in France in 1916! And who would benefit? Joffre was replaced by a general named Nivelle, who would only increase the losses in 1917 and be brought down in turn. All along the front the bodies of those who had died in vain lay rotting between the lines by the tens of thousands. "The infantrymen, mowed down by machine guns," one soldier related, "lie face down on the ground, drawn up as though at drill." The rain fell on them inexorably. Bullets broke their bleached bones. Rats swarmed under the faded uniforms; "enormous rats, fat on human flesh," in the words of an on-the-spot witness, who continues: "The body displayed a grimacing head devoid of flesh, the skull bare, the eyes eaten away. A set of false teeth had slid onto the rotted shirt, and a disgusting animal jumped out of the wide-open mouth."

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Was a less atrocious solution at least being approached anywhere else? What was happening at the Italian front? There, too, the Allies had wished to fight it out, but Austria had cut the ground from under them. On May 15, 1916 she captured Asiago and took 30,000 prisoners. Then she marked time. After a conference at Chantilly, Allied plans fixed the dates for a triple offensive: first in France, and when success had been attained there, afterwards in Italy and in Russia.

On the Italian front the attack took place on August 28, 1916. They would make four tries at it. On the first try they captured Gorizia, a quiet provincial seat where, strangely enough, in a convent are to be found the remains of the last legitimate pretender to the throne of France, the Count of Chambord. The Italians, who had a larger force than the Austrians, carried the position valiantly. But they could go no farther. A second offensive, in September 1916 failed. Then a third one in October and a fourth in November. They were stopped at Gorizia. The cost: for the Italians 75,000 casualties, and still more for the Austrians. There, as in France, the offensives of 1916 had not even served the grave-diggers, who suffered enforced unemployment thanks to the machine-gun fire.

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That left the Russians. There, a surprise! When everyone was failing, the Russians were going to succeed! On August 16, 1916, at the worst moment of Verdun, General Brusilov, tough as a Cossack hetman and a capable leader (among so many who were sluggish and of ill repute) launched an attack through Galicia. He had prepared his attack intelligently, assembling a heavy concentration of artillery that finally had sufficient ammunition. The Austrians had

stripped themselves of part of their troops and heavy artillery in order to carry out their offensive of May 15 against the Italians. If a Russian offensive fell upon them on the east, they would not be able to resist. A week after Austria had attacked toward Asiago, Brusilov charged into the Austrian lines. He was going to reconquer all of Bukovina and part of Galicia. The results were extrordinary: more than 400,000 prisoners! A hard blow for the Austrians. A thousand of their cannon had also been captured. They had lost 25,000 square kilometers of territory (compared with the insignificant eighty square kilometers won by the French at Peronne). That would be the Russians' biggest victory, and their last as well. Brusilov's right wing, facing Prussia, had not been able to take the offensive. There it had run up against the Germans. The Russians on the right were brought to a halt, then cut to pieces. Brusilov, fortunate as he had been, had his horse shot from under him. Once again, the offensive had accomplished naught, despite its initial success. The Russian army was weary, practically falling apart; revolution was already rumbling, as the ground rumbles and smokes before a volcano erupts. The soldiers deserted in droves. At Kovel the Germans annihilated the Russian army. Russia's great opportunity was gone.

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It was then, however, that the last Balkan country not yet involved entered the war. In May 1916, when Brusilov was badly mauling Austria, Romania thought her hour had come. Its government had waited for two years, not making a bid until it was sure of winning. Now the politicians thought they could move. But a month was lost putting the finishing touches on the declaration of war. It was already too late. Brusilov was no longer winning. he first retreated, then was swept away. To join up with him was to board not a victorious cruiser but a sinking tub. Clemenceau's famous words are well known: "Among all the swine in this war, the Romanians have been the worst." They had extorted from all competitors both the possible and the impossible, concessions of territory, loans, and bribes. As in the case of the Italians, the French and British had promised ten times as much as the Germans. But the business with the Reich had been for along time a flourishing one. The Romanians had found it in their interest to play for time. Brusilov, swooping down like a hurricane, was definitely precipitating the downfall of the Austrians, they thought. It was all over, and it was imperative that they not wait an instant longer. "The lion you think dead might just make a second Serbia out of Romania with a single swipe of its paw," the Austro-Hungarian minister of foreign affairs retorted at the final moment to his Romanian colleague. The latter didn't believe him. On August 27, 1916 Romania declared war. In three months she was to be totally annihilated. On November 27, 1916 the victorious German army, let by Marshal von Mackensen, entered the empty streets of Bucharest to the shrill sound of fifes.

CHAPTER XXVI

Rout in the East

Romania nevertheless, had been a considerable morsel: 15 divisions, 560,000 men; five times the numbers of the British infantry on August 4, 1914. Geographically and strategically, her position was essential. Romania had been able to prevent the Russians, after August 1, 1914, from swarming into the Balkans. Had she been united with St. Petersburg from the onset of the war, she would have assured Russia's linkup with the Serbs and made it possible either to bring the Bulgarians over to the side of the Allies or to annihilate them, thus opening to Russia the road to Constantinople. That was why the Russians had done everything in their power to break up the defensive military pact which bound Bucharest to Vienna. Russian activities to corrupt the Romanians had been considerable. "Deciphered communications revealed to me many times what was going on," Poincaré confessed. He had received M. Take Ionescu, the most notorious of the Romanians bought by the tsar, in his private residence in the Rue du Commandant Marchand. The Romanian doorway to the Balkans was worth its weight in solid gold. The Russians had declared. themselves ready to grant them everything: Transylvania, Banat, half of Bukovina. This generous promise of spoils seemed rather dubiously optimistic to Poincaré. He wrote (L'invasion, p. 33): "These sales on credit of eastern populations and the pelts of live bears are a bit hazardous and childish." But the words are certainly apt: sale on credit of populations; populations were "sold on credit" to attract allies. M. Poincaré himself agreed to those sales unqualifiedly. They involved several million people; Transylvania alone had 3,700,000 inhabitants. Since the Romanians had dawdled so, the Germans, with their habitual sense of organization, had been able to prepare for the counterthrust. They'd had the time to bring back some excellent divisions from the Russian front, which had been in a state of suspended animation for a month, and these, together with the Austro-Hungarian divisions, had been massed in Hungary in two great armies. The greedy Romanian politicians, thinking only of easy annexations, had stupidly massed almost all their troops at the same point, at the foot of the Carpathians in Transylvania. Even at one against two, as was the usual situation throughout 1916, the disciplined, elite German soldiers always won. It would be the same in the Carpathians. In eighteen days, from September 25 to October 13, 1916, 400,000 Romanians were swept aside, engulfed as if a tidal wave had overflowed them. The link-up of the German armies would be just a matter of tactics. On December 6, 1916, at Orsova on the Danube, they captured the last Romanian troops still offering resistance. The rest were no more than a horde fleeing towards the east. One more ally smashed to smithereens. The bad faith, the "sale of peoples," the annexations, which were wrong by any standard, had only served to aggravate the western reverses of the Entente, now painfully parapeted behind their hundreds of thousands of dead at Artois, Champagne, and Verdun. For the Russians the Romanian debacle was going to be the straw that broke their back once and for all.

The last hope of the tsar had crumbled. "The government," a delegate to the Russian congress of the union of towns declared, "has fallen into the hands of buffoons, sharpers, and traitors." In the Duma, on December 26, 1916, the so-

cialists called openly for revolution: "If you continue to fight this government by legal means, you are like Don Quixote, who tilted at windmills." That same evening, Rasputin, the great favorite of the tsaritza, the corrupt and omnipotent colossus, was poisoned, bludgeoned, machine- gunned, and thrown headfirst into the Neva through a hole chopped in the ice. The beaten troops were no longer willing to fight. The trains of pious priests had been derailed. The famished people readied their hammers and sickles. The last prime minister, Prince Galitsin, was an impotent old man. The minister of the interior, Protopopov, was a dotard who suffered from complete paralysis. "At any moment" the British ambassador wrote, "Russia may burst into flames." Another three months and the tsar would take the final plunge.

The tsarist regime had finally become aware that it was sinking in quicksand. Its head and arms were still afloat, but the sea of blood and mire would soon swallow them up. Germany, on learning of the coming collapse, had tried discreetly to offer the tsar a helping hand. The Kaiser was his first cousin. Wilhelm II had never wished to make war against him. Besides, he more than ever needed all his forces on the western front in 1916. Negotiations got quietly under way. When the coded telegrams from the Romanian legation, which were deciphered in Paris, suggested the danger of a Russian withdrawal, the French and the British politicians were terrified. Clemenceau roared, "Then we are goners!" It was imperative to quell immediately any possibility of a German offer and to offer more themselves, to promise so many benefits that the beneficiary, overwhelmed by the wealth of the gifts, could not refuse. The system had worked well with the Italians, the Romanians, and the Arabs. The draft of a Franco-Russian treaty was drawn up by the secretary- general of French foreign affairs, Berthelot, the eminent Paris collaborator with the Balkan countries, who was said to have personally composed the text of the Serbian refusal of a joint committee to study the crime of Sarajevo. In 1916, in a new offer, Berthelot awarded the Russians the Austrian crown territory of Galicia, Hungarian Ruthenia, that part of Poland ruled by the Germans, and Constantinople and the Straits. Armenia as well, which had already been promised to the Armenians. Plus a large part of Asia Minor, including the Holy Land, which had been granted earlier to the Emir Hussein. With that document the French government cancelled its promises of independence, previously given with great fanfare to the Czechs, the Ruthenians, and the Poles. As the Pan-Slays had anticipated even before 1914, they would be reduced to the role of subjects in three Russian viceroyalties entrusted to three grand dukes.

When Ambassador Paléologue received the text in St. Petersburg, with orders to transmit it immediately to the government of the tsar, he exploded with indignation and sent Paris the following telegram, which is almost humorous in view of the fact that this French diplomat had unquestionably urged a war of conquest with Alsace-Lorraine as the prize: "Our country is not waging a war of conquest, but a war of liberation, a war of justice." And Paléologue added: "Our British and Italian allies will never go along with us, will never consent to such an increase in territory, an increase that will extend Russian power clear

to the Mediterranean, clear to the Suez Canal." It was then necessary to send a French mission to Russia posthaste, so fearful was Paris that St. Petersburg would make peace with Germany behind its back.

Like Paléologue, the French minister, Ribot, refused to preside over the mission. Finally, the presidency of the mission was entrusted to the colonial minister, a pudgy little man from the south of France, not very polished, named Gaston Doumergue. In return for the enormous territories the Pan-Slays were receiving, he was supposed to persuade the tsar and Sazonov at St. Petersburg to sign the following text, containing the official commitments Russia was making to France: Alsace-Lorraine will be returned to France unconditionally, not with the reduced boundaries set by the Treaty of Vienna, but with the boundaries it had prior to 1790. Its borders will extend as far as those of the ancient duchy of Lorraine and will be drawn in accordance with the wishes of the French government in such a way as to reincorporate in French territory all the iron and steel works of the region as well as the coal fields of the Saar valley. All other territory situated on the left bank of the Rhine that is now part of Germany will be completely detached from the latter country. Any such territory not incorporated into the territory of France will be formed into a neutral buffer state. Nicholas II warmly encouraged Doumergue: "Take Mainz, take Koblenz, go as far as you like" (Marc Ferro, La Grande Guerre, p. 241). When the mission was over, little Gaston, grinning from ear to ear, triumphantly stated to the press (Petit Parisien, Figaro, Le Temps): "We have a closer and more cordial understanding than ever! Russian collaboration has not failed and will never fail." This on March 6, 1917! A week later to the day, on the stroke of midnight, the tsarist regime would go up in smoke. Little Gaston had shown a shrewdness and farsightedness that was nothing short of stunning. Briand, for all his astuteness, had been even less perspicacious than little Gaston. Historian Ferro writes: The Russians considered that the Straits comprised the compensation offered in return for Alsace-Lorraine. In return for the left bank of the Rhine, they wanted liberty of action on their western border: that is to say that France should abandon the cause of Polish independence. Briand hesitated before acquiescing, but he resigned himself to it on March 10, 1917. (La Grande Guerre, p. 242) Thus Briand, too, agreed to the treaty, but "without England's having been informed." Once the French had crossed the Rubicon, the British would growl, but there was nothing they could do except acquiesce. The year 1916 had seen the battlefields of France strewn with the bodies of hundreds of thousands of British soldiers, and the waters of the Dardanelles dotted with the drowned sailors of their fleet. For Russia to abandon them would mean that the entire might of Turkey would be able to swing round on them on the Euphrates as well as in the Sinai. Like the others, the British rulers told themselves that promising wasn't the same as giving. All of them would be as slippery as eels when they were called to account for their promises at Versailles in 1919.

In March of 1917 the Russians and the French were equally blind. On March 8, 1917, in starving St. Petersburg, the mob broke into the butcher shops, grocery stores, and bakeries and cleaned them out. Protopopov, the minister of the

interior, learned of the incidents without emotion, saying, "If there is going to be a revolution in Russia, it won't be for another fifty years." Reminiscent of the tsar, who, two days before the war, had written in his personal notebook, "Today we played tennis. The weather was magnificent." And on the following day: "I went for a walk by myself. It was very hot. Took a delicious bath." Happy the empty heads that don't even feel the hot breath of passing cannonballs. Minister Protopov's "fifty years" would last just four days. On March 12, 1917, the Russian government, abandoned by the troops, disappeared. The duma and the St. Petersburg Soviet on March 14 set up a provisional government. Apparently it was not yet more than halfway revolutionary. For its president and figurehead it had Prince Lvov. Princes always abound in revolutions. Sometimes they are named Philippe Egalité, are fanatics, vote for the decapitation of their relatives, and afterwards, as a well- deserved thank-you for services rendered, are themselves made a head shorter. To counterbalance the princely crown of Lvov, a Jewish socialist was appointed to the impromptu government: Aleksandr Kerensky. On May 13, 1917 the tsar's train was blocked by rioters. On the night of May 14 he abdicated, then went to bed. "I sleep long and moderately," he wrote calmly in his imperial notebook. For a moment he would still try to have his son accepted as regent of the empire. Then Grand Duke Michael. The latter would be Michael II for a few hours, then abdicate in turn. Then came the republic.

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The Allies wanted to believe in that new republic. "Perhaps it is the renewal of Russia," commented Briand. London and Paris made haste to send eager delegations. Several cabinet ministers and some socialist deputies went running to the new Mecca, notably wealthy Marcel Cachin, the future leader of the French Communists. They were overflowing with the eloquence and enthusiasm of fraternity. They even went so far as to approve imprudently the formula of the Soviets, "Peace without annexations or requisitions." The slogan didn't correspond to the agreement signed by the tsar just before his overthrow, allotting hundreds of thousands of kilometers of territory. In that treaty, endorsed by both parties, the tsar delivered almost the whole of Germany to French ambitions. On the other hand, the Cossacks were to be able to ride clear to Jerusalem. The new Russian republicans would at most allow a referendum in Alsace-Lorraine, "under the control of an international commission." Another affirmation which was very little in line with Allied policy: "The responsibility for the war lies with all of us." What then of the horrible Kaiser solely responsible, and the gibbet already prepared for him? The illusions were stubborn, and they became ever more dizzying. The Allied delegates rushed to embrace the leaders of the revolutionary government. They parted from their new brothers with tears in their eyes. "They set out as shameless partisans," Ferro tells us, "concerned about the interests of their governments, and they returned from Russia singing the glories of the fatherland of the revolution." (La Grande Guerre, p. 332) With an eye to keeping up appearances, the Russian minister of foreign affairs had made it a point to be soothing in his messages to

the Allies. His foreign program: "To combat the common enemy to the finish and without hesitation" and to respect "the international obligations incurred by the fallen regime in a steadfast manner." Prince Lvov having been liquidated without delay, Kerensky became minister of war. He left to harangue the troops at the front. The peasant soldiers thought only of deserting the army and getting back to their villages in time to obtain their share of the distribution of land, the only point in the revolutionary program that interested them. The military command fell apart; some generals were assassinated; others vanished. With a glorious lack of comprehension, Nivelle, the French commanding general, nonetheless demanded that the disintegrating Russian army go back on the offensive. In Paris, the future Marshal Pétain, always calm and clearheaded, retorted with extreme skepticism, "The Russian army is nothing but a façade. We must be prepared for it to collapse as soon as it makes a move." Miraculously, it did move. The Russian offensive demanded by Nivelle got under way on July 1, 1917, on a forty-kilometer front: 23 divisions commanded by Brusilov, the perennial prime mover. The first day yielded astonishing results; his troops defeated the first line of Austro-German forces. But there wasn't a second day. Brusilov had taken 10,000 prisoners; they would be the last. Old Pétain was right. Some Russian divisions refused to attack. There was "no way to compel the troops to fight," Brusilov acknowledged.

The enemy counterattacked; this time it was the Germans, the soldiers par excellence, driving the Russians in a frantic flight through Galicia, which was completely lost in ten days, with 160,000 killed, wounded, and taken prisoner. A month later, General von Huffier would have only to give the Duma a little shove to take possession of Riga. It was a rout. In France, too, it would soon be close to a rout.

CHAPTER XXVII

Trembling Resolve

The Allied attacks which, it was anticipated, would bring the Germans to their knees in 1917, were to be three-fold. First, the attack of the Russians. Once the tsar had fallen, Brusilov had valiantly delivered his knockout blow. But the attack had shattered against the enemy. The Italian attack hadn't come to much in the course of the spring. Prime Minister Rosselli (who in the world still remembers that name?) was a decrepit old man, a spark barely alive. In the parliament, the socialists were rebellious. "It's not tolerable for the Italian people to have to face another winter of war," they declared, already feeling cold months before Christmas. As in the preceding year, it was the Anglo-French front which would have to deliver and, if necessary, receive the big blow. The new commander-in-chief, Nivelle, didn't intend to be satisfied with "pecking away at the front." He wanted a breakthrough battle. Lyautey, Pétain, and even Painlevé, the minister of war, put scarcely any credence in an attack. Nivelle played the prima donna: "We shall break through the German front whenever we wish to." The tactics he envisioned were to attack a weak point by surprise. In one day, he asserted, or at most two days, the German front would be broken,

and "with the breach thus opened, the terrain will be clear for us to go where we will, to the coast of the North Sea or to the Belgian capital, to the Meuse or to the Rhine."

Nivelle was opposed by Marshal von Hindenburg, the powerful and unshakeable German military commander. He was seconded by General Ludendorff, the true military genius of the First World War. They were not about to give the French either a weak point or a chance of surprise. They knew that strategy must not stifle tactics. They had suspected the plan of their adversaries, which in any case had been announced with great fanfare by the newspapers.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff, silently and with the greatest of care, had prepared huge, impregnable concrete positions twenty kilometers back. Just before the French offensive, they fell back to these lines with great stealth, The terrain in front of the Germans was now desolate, virtually impassable, and flooded over a wide area. The best officers of the French general staff were worried. The offensive was being lured into a trap. Nivelle, however, was cockier than ever: "If I'd been giving Hindenburg his orders, I'd want him to pull back just as he's done." Now that the Germans had made things so easy for him, he launched the attack on April 9, 1917. The Anglo-Canadians went over the top first, then the French. The attack extended from the Oise to La Montagne de Reims. The most famous battle position would be Chemin des Dames. Years later I passed through that ghastly landscape. Human skulls still lay around all over. Tourists used to carry them away in the luggage-racks of their bicycles. 40,000 men were killed in the first few dozen hours.

Nivelle thought he could carry the day by hurling tanks into the battle, makeshift tanks in which the gasoline storage was placed forward. In one afternoon, 60 of the 120 tanks burst into flames. The crews were burned alive. After three days, the Allies had to break off the battle without having overrun even a single one of Hindenburg's bunkers. The returning soldiers were in terrible condition. An officer who witnessed their return from the front wrote, "I have never seen anything more poignant than the two regiments streaming along that road in front of me all day long. "First there were skeletons of companies, sometimes led by a surviving officer supporting himself with a cane. All of them were marching, or rather advancing with short steps, knees giving way, and zig-zagging as though intoxicated. Then came some groups that were perhaps squads, perhaps sections, you couldn't tell. They went along, heads down, despondent, weighed down by their gear, carrying their blood- and dirt- soiled rifles by the slings. The color of their faces scarcely differed from the color of their uniforms. Mud had covered everything, dried completely, and then been soiled afresh with more mud. Their clothing as well as their skin was encrusted with it. Several cars came driving up with a roar, scattering this pitiable flood of survivors of the great hecatomb. But they said nothing. They had lost even the strength to complain. An unfathomable sorrow welled in the eyes of these veritable war-slaves when they came in sight of the village rooftops. In that movement their features appeared taut with suffering and congealed with dust. Those silent faces seemed to proclaim something awful: the unthinkable horror

of their martyrdom. "Some territorials who were watching beside me remained pensive. Two of those territorials silently cried like women." Thus ended, in April 1917, General Nivelle's race to Ostend and the Rhine.

The British Marshal Haig had thought he would do better than his French colleague. He launched his attack between Cambrai and a Flemish village with a complicated name: Passchendaele. He was assisted by Belgian troops and by a French contingent. Marshal Haig, too, thought to carry the day with a massive assault by his tanks. They penetrated the first German line of defense just in time to be turned into an enormous inferno. There, too, half the tanks were hit squarely in the fuel storage section and destroyed amid the screams of crews being roasted alive in their flaming coffins. Afterwards it was the usual butchery. Passchendaele was one of the biggest slaughterhouses of the war. The number of English, Scottish and Irish who were killed or wounded there is well-nigh incredible: 400,000, "for nothing," the historian Ferro adds. None of which would keep Joffre, the French general, from writing with reference to his British friends, "I should never dare leave them to guard the lines; alone, they would be routed." Or Pétain from adding, in 1917, the year of Passchendaele: "The British command is incompetent." As may be seen, among the Allies brotherhood reigned.

The news from Italy did not gladden the Allies. In the Lizenzo valley, amid rock walls a thousand meters high, the Germans and Austrians during those months were in top form. They had finished off the Russians. They occupied all of Serbia and Romania as well. For the first time, Hindenburg and Ludendorff had agreed to second the efforts of the Austrians, by giving them 37 German divisions. Certain moves of the new Austro-Hungarian emperor, Charles I, disturbed them, and by reinforcing him they hoped to restore his enthusiasm. Seven German divisions would serve as the battering ram of the attack. Two traitors had communicated the Austro-German offensive plans to the Italian General Carmona several days in advance. Despite the fact that he had 41 divisions at his disposal, General Carmona was worried about "symptoms of a growing spirit of revolution among the troops." It was already October 14, and snow was falling. In three days the principal peaks had fallen to the Germans. From then on the valley was open. The disaster of Caporetto was under way. Some Italian units heroically sacrificed themselves, but others surrendered in entire divisions. Countless deserters turned tail and fled. The Tagliamento was crossed. The Italian army couldn't pull itself together until it reached the Piave. The results were added up: not too many had been killed, about 10,000. But the number of Italian prisoners taken was immense: 293,000. Moreover, 3,000 cannon-half of the entire Italian artillery forces-had been lost, and more than 300,000 rifles, 73,000 horses and mules, and the principal food and supply depots. Caporetto meant the complete loss of morale in Italy.

The phenomenon was not limited to the Italians. Armies everywhere were grumbling. The soldiers had suffered too much. They had seen too many massacres. In Russia they had set off an explosion, but it was plain that in France, too,

there was danger that mutinies would break out and the front give way. In August 1914 the deluded people had embarked enthusiastically on "a short war" that would be not so much hard work as a romp. At worst, the French and the Russians would meet on the banks of the Spree at Berlin within three months! As may be seen in photos of the period, in Berlin, Vienna, London, and Paris a popular delirium held sway. At Munich a young fellow named Adolf Hitler fell on his knees to thank the heavens for that stroke of good luck. The thousands of trains and the first columns of trucks bore destination points chalked on them in big letters: Berlin for the French; Paris for the Germans. It was going to be a fine trip. But it had finally gone off the tracks. The common people knew nothing at all, neither how horrible war is (and it had reached new heights in the West during the past half century), nor how Freemasonry had directed their members in high office to use all possible subterfuges, lies and diplomatic forgeries to pursue interests alien and detrimental to them, the majority of common people. The Sazonovs, the Balfours, the Poincarés, with cynicism and hypocrisy, were leading the people to genocide. There had been the great massacres of 1914, then those of 1915, then those of 1916. Now it had started all over again, for the fourth time, in 1917. More than half the conscripts of 1914 were dead. Whatever their country, men wanted no more of it.

There was great misery on the home front as well. The women were exhausted by the difficult job of cultivating the fields in the absence of the men, substituting their feeble strength for the hundreds of thousands of requisitioned horses; and with turning out the millions of artillery shells in the war factories alongside alien laborers from the colonies. People were cold and hungry. In the beginning the masses had been in complete agreement, because in those days the patriotism of the people was a thousand times more active than it is at present. The working man was a nationalist. The average middle-class person got a lump in his throat when a military band passed by. The socialist deputies, too, had voted for war, the French as well as the German. The ballyhoo in the press had roused the people. Anyone who had protested against the war in 1914 would have been lynched. That was no longer the case in 1917. The slaughters of 1917 brought the soldiers to the end of their morale. Many French units rebelled. In each of sixty French battalions or regiments several hundred men on separate occasions flatly refused to return to combat. At Soissons, two regiments which had mutinied attempted to march on Paris. The Internationale was sung and red flags were waved. It was St. Petersburg in miniature. It wasn't a general revolt, but there were more than forty thousand mutineers nonetheless, who for several days made it almost impossible to maintain order. The military leaders had to resort to reprisals. There were thousands of arrests: 3,427 men were sentenced, 544 of them condemned to death. Most horrible of all, soldiers had to shoot their comrades. There were 116 executions. Without thousands of imprisonments, the war in the west would have been irretrievably lost by the Allies, just as in Russia, and France would have been engulfed in revolution.

It was the same everywhere. By hurling their countries into a war of conquest,

or of reconquest, in 1914 (Alsace-Lorraine on the one side, the Balkans and Constantinople on the other), the warmongers had destroyed the foundations of Europe. Her economic basis was shattered. Her peoples were decimated. International order had been struck a direct blow. Only the firm grip of certain statesmen, who had no use for democratic whims, here and there stemmed the catastrophe. Thus Clemenceau, who came to power on November 14, 1917, hatchet in hand, quelled dissent ruthlessly. "I'll burn everything, even the furniture," the fearless old man of seventy-six years declared. "Neither treason nor half-treason, just war! Nothing but war!" The so-called "war for freedom" could not be won except by muzzling freedom. The Radical Clemenceau, forcing the panic-stricken parliament to turn to him, became the absolute master of France in 1917. He immediately crushed all antiwar opposition, imprisoned his defeatist adversaries, shot those who were traitors or who looked like traitors to him. Even Poincaré, the Masonic provocateur of 1914, who had had no choice but to go along with Clemenceau's nomination, had been shut up in the gilded cage of the presidential palace, after having had a muzzle clapped over his mouth.

In the beginning the Socialist party (a third of the German deputies) had acted patriotically. Then its extremists had organized strikes in the war factories, turning thousands of workers away from their jobs. The strikes had seriously impeded production. As for the army, the most disciplined army in the world, it remained and would remain brave and orderly right up to the last day of the war. But the German political arm would not have its Clemenceau. Wilhelm II kept far away from his troops. He was neither a strategist nor a tactician. He was enthusiastic when his troops were moving ahead, dismayed at every defeat. "Pray for us," he telegraphed at the moment of the Marne to his worthy empress, who was busy with her knitting. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg totally lacked the psychology of a fighting man. He had been replaced by a completely unknown functionary. Michaelis, who had formerly been in charge of the replenishment of stores in Prussia. A third chancellor had succeeded him, a man named Hertling, a Bavarian member of the "Society of Resolute Christians," and an aged bibliophile. Power, to him, instead of being a marvelous instrument of direct, complete, and decisive action, was a "bitter chalice." He didn't drink it for very long. Arteriosclerosis deprived him of his cup. He went from one fainting fit to another. At last he received extreme unction "in a cloud of incense."

Things were worse still in Austria-Hungary, where four successive chancellors, Berchtold, Martinitz, Seidler, and Esterhazy, succeeded each other in the space of a year. Germany's great misfortune was this: if the French had had a Hertling (a resolute Christian floating in incense), as council president; or if they had simply kept their Vivianis, Ribots, and Painlevés (hesitant, shaky, tired old democratic nags), or if, on the contrary, the Germans had possessed a political leader like Clemenceau, cleaver in hand, the fate of the world would have been different. Clemenceau had been called the father of victory, and he deserved it.

Without him, despite the immense sacrifices of the French soldiers, there would

have been no victory for France. She would have gone down, if at the height of military disaster, she'd had no one to lead her but a bearded little hypocrite like Poincaré, Europe's most efficient gravedigger. Since 1914, France had been beaten every year. "One more hemorrhage like Verdun, and France will fall in a faint," the newspaper L'Heure had seen fit to write. Out of the 3,600,000 men of 1914, there remained only 964,000 surviving combatants at the end of 1917; 2,636,000 were dead, wounded, prisoners, or missing. More than ten of the wealthiest departments of France had been occupied for nearly three years. War profiteers were arrogantly living the high life. Financially, France had been bled white. It had been necessary to issue sixty billion francs in bonds for the national defense. As far as loans went, some had been covered only to the amount of 47.5 percent. Small investors, their heads turned by the hired press, had laid out billions in the Russian loans before 1914, and now found themselves ruined. As for agriculture, it had declined thirty to fifty percent (fifty-two percent of the French soldiers were peasants). Prices had already gone up 400 percent and would reach 600 percent by the end of the war. The bread was vile, but censorship prohibited anyone from writing that "the mixture of corn and wheat flours can cause alopecia." Syphilis was ravaging the country, but there, too, the censors were vigorously plying their scissors. The information blackout, ordered by narrow-minded and despotic military men, was unbelievable. Prefects could send reports to their ministers only after they had been submitted for censorship. The ignorance in which the civilian members of the government were left was such that the president of the council once learned only from his florist that the army general headquarters was moving from Chantilly. It was imperative that the public be completely ignorant of anything that might awaken its suspicions, such as, for example, the news that serious mutinies had taken place or that two million Hindus and blacks were being used on the battlefields. Or that anti-colonial troubles had taken place in Senegal, Dahomey, and Annam, following protests against the deportation of native workers and soldiers to Europe. Or that without the labor of women, there would be a shortage of artillery shells at the front. It was only in a small informal meeting that Joffre had seen fit to state that "if the women working in the factories were to stop for twenty minutes, France would lose the war."

On the other hand, the press abounded in marvelous pronouncements aimed at stirring the masses. General Fayolle: "Joan of Arc is looking down on us from heaven with satisfaction."

La Croix: "The history of France is the history of God." Lavedan, member of the Academy: "I believe by the power of all that is holy in this crusade for civilization. I believe in the blood of the wounds, in the water of benediction. I believe in us. I believe in God. I believe. I believe." If Lavedan still believed in that wonderful jumble, soldiers believed less and less "in the blood of the wounds," and the public had more and more doubts about the regenerative effects of "the water of benediction." Far from benediction, what France was experiencing in 1917 was hunger, hundreds of thousands of widows and orphans, and millions of soldiers ground up in the mill of trench warfare. British censorship was no

less fanatical and idiotic. On its orders, the press asked that the works of Wagner, Mozart, and Richard Strauss be outlawed. Léon Daudet in Paris titled an article "Down with Wagner." Darer and Cranach narrowly escaped being taken down from the walls of the Louvre and the British Museum. Now, after three years of war, in France as well as in Germany, socialist and syndicalist leaders, who were only a handful in 1914 but were many in 1917, spoke against these prohibitions and tried, despite a thousand complications arranged by the police, to rescue public opinion from this appalling state of affairs.

Some of them were undoubtedly ringleaders ready to serve any cause, with an eye to making a row, and often hired for that purpose. For example, the Communist agitators of Berlin. In 1915, after two previous meetings in Bern, a pacifist conference had been held at Zimmerwald in Switzerland. It brought together a total of thirty-eight delegates, but an attempt at Communist infiltration had been evident. Lenin, Trotsky, Radek, and Zinoviev were there, teeth bared like Siberian wolves. The following year, the son-in-law of Karl Marx, Longet, and his followers held a pacifist demonstration at the French socialist congress of April 16, 1916 which attracted much attention. Their motion demanding a peace with no annexations obtained a third of the ballots: 900 votes against 1800. Another conference was held at Kienthal. Its manifesto already had the tone of the October 1917 harangues at St. Petersburg: Proletarians of Europe! Millions of cadavers cover the battlefields. Millions of men will be disabled for the rest of their days. Europe has become a giant human slaughterhouse. Above and beyond the borders, above and beyond the fields of battle, above and beyond the devastated countryside, proletarians of all countries, unite!

At Kienthal, Lenin's proposal to turn the war of nations into civil war triumphed, receiving two thirds of the votes. On February 18, 1917, the committee set forth its plan of battle to the proletariat: to turn their weapons not against their brothers, the foreign soldiers, but against imperialism, the enemy at home. One astonishing note: a million copies of that antimilitarist manifesto were distributed in Germany; in France, on the other hand, only ten thousand copies could be distributed in secret. In Paris, anyone who was not for the war was a traitor, so much so that the syndicalist leaders were all given a special physical examination by a review board. None of them, however bowlegged, escaped induction. The chief of the Second Bureau, Colonel Goubet, saw to it that special treatment was reserved for them, ordering them "to certain Saharan regions where the rolling of roads coincides with the shaping of character, and from which one does not always return." The wish was expressed clearly and elegantly.

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Pacifist propaganda during the First World War was above all the work of the left and especially of the extreme left. The industrialists, the financiers, and the middle classes should have been more concerned than anyone about the senseless destruction of wealth as well as the massive elimination of the cream of the labor force, the youth. The conservatives, on the contrary, during those

four years lived in a hermetically sealed world of claptrap and illusions. It was the intellectuals, from Barrès to Paul Bourget and Henri Massis, who most eloquently praised the extraordinary benefits of the war and most execrated the savagery of Kant, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and the other German barbarians. Alone in this tumult of hate, Romain Rolland published his Au-dessus de la mélée [Above the Battle] which for all its title was nothing but a long lyrical sigh in favor of peace.

The men of the left, French or foreign, were not necessarily agents of Moscow and enemies of society. Often they were simply friends of mankind. One of the latter was Camille Huysmans, secretary-general of the Second International, a Belgian with the long ringed neck of a restless boa. He was intelligent, caustic, cynical for its shock value, and profoundly tolerant. In 1917, Kamil - he was called that in Antwerp-had urged pacifism along rational and strictly logical lines. The previous conferences in Switzerland had been too impassioned, and above all too much controlled by Lenin and the other Bolshevik theoreticians, for whom the world was an object to be manipulated cold-bloodedly. A serious conference was needed in which the adversaries would meet again to deal in depth, without prejudice and without intemperate language, with the possibility and the conditions for a peace of reconciliation. As secretary-general of a Second International stricken with paralysis, Huysmans dreamed of restoring to the International the use of its limbs. It was in that spirit that in 1917 he convoked what has been called the Stockholm Conference. There the direct representatives of the enemy peoples were to get to know each other, exchange views, and weigh the chances of a "peace without annexations or indemnities." Was such a peace possible? Would it be possible to end a war in which all had been partly responsible, in which neither side, despite several million dead, had achieved decisive results, or seemed in a position to do so? The matter was worth discussing. It was not discussed, however, and for a good reason: those principally concerned, the French delegates, had been forbidden to attend the conference, the Paris government having refused to grant them the passports that would have enabled them to make the trip. The French government did not want anyone talking peace in any way, shape, or form. To talk of peace would be to make concessions, to admit to a few faults, to renounce certain claims. One could imagine that in similar negotiations the enemy, especially the Germans, who had been the big winner up to that point-would not grant everything, acknowledge everything, deliver everything. But was it really unreasonable to be reasonable? In 1917, there were already seventeen million men dead, wounded, or taken prisoner. Trying to save the lives, blood, and freedom of millions more who would be lost if the war continued, was that really so criminal? Wasn't all that blood worth a few sacrifices, a few blows to one's ego? Many delegates came to Stockholm but the most important, the French, were not there, kept at home by their police, who would thenceforth consider them dangerous suspects.

Even a man like Camille Huysmans, who was not French, became the object of a relentless persecution by the French police after the Stockholm Conference. They whipped up campaigns to discredit him everywhere. He was "the man of

Stockholm," paid of course by the Germans. The newspapers repeated it over and over without letup. He was so defamed that after the Allied victory in 1918 his own followers, who were ashamed of their leader, barred him in Brussels from access to the Maison du Peuple. For ten years he suffered a persecution that was comparable to the ordeal, in France, of M. Caillaux. Even before 1914 Caillaux had understood that the French and the Germans were interdependent, and that it was necessary to effect a reconciliation with the Germans instead of fighting them. For his effrontery, he was repudiated for several years. Camille Huysmans had to expiate his bid for peace for a longer period: ten years. It was then that King Albert I, the Roi Chevalier of the Allies, summoned Huysmans to his palace at Brussels. Up to that time the Belgian monarch had refrained from speaking. The passions and the hatreds were such that to say anything slightly favorable to "the man of Stockholm" would have been to commit suicide. In 1917, before going to the Stockholm Conference, the so-called agent of the kaiser had visited King Albert in person on the Flanders front, where he commanded the Belgian troops facing the Germans. Huysmans wanted to be sure that the congress he was organizing at Stockholm did not constitute either a challenge or an obstacle to the military and political plans of the man who occupied the very first place, morally, on the Allied side. The others, Poincaré, Grey, Sonnino, Bratianu, had been double or triple dealers. Albert I, on the other hand, was the victim of his country's geography, which made it a railroad turntable through which all trains claimed the right of passage. His own conduct had been noble and proper. He listened carefully to Camille Huysmans. His straightforward answer was, word for word, as follows: "You are right. It is necessary to negotiate. No second war, whatever my government may think of it. Carry on your efforts. I will protect you." "I could have told the truth," Huysmans wrote to de Launay, the Belgian historian, "but I held stubbornly to what the King himself said, and that's the way it was." It was handled rather solemnly. The king later cleared Camille Huysmans-who later became prime minister-in the presence of two Belgian generals "whom he had summoned and charged in my presence to tell the truth," Huymans himself related on coming out of the royal palace. But that honest man paid for his efforts-which, however ill-considered in view of the passions of the time, were humane and correct in any event-with ten years of being slandered. "To destroy my effectiveness," Huysmans stated, "the French secret service tried to represent me as a man in the pay of Germany. In Belgium that accusation was believed in the French-speaking part of the country and also in Brussels." There were also certain semi-official negotiations, involving Austria-Hungary and Germany, which might have made it possible as early as 1917 to re-establish peace. How and why did they fail?

CHAPTER XXVIII

Stabs at Peace

The proposals of the new Austrian emperor, Charles I, were the most important. In 1916 the young monarch had just succeeded Franz Josef, the emperor as old as Belgium (both were born in 1830). Thus Charles I had not been involved in any way in the unleashing of the war in 1914. He had little liking for the

German Kaiser, his ally by chance. His two brothers-in-law, Princess Sixtus and Xavier of Bourbon Parma, were fighting in the armies of the king of Belgium on the western front, against the Germans. Charles I was neither a reformer like Joseph II nor a tactical genius like a Metternich. He was not very aware of political realities, but he was sincere and bursting with a goodwill that on occasion made him naive. He was profoundly honest, but of course honesty in politics seldom carries one very far.

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Charles I had no capable ministers at his side, or at least any he could trust: Berchtold, the clumsy bungler of July 1914, had been replaced by a gloomy-eyed Hungarian, and then by Count Czernin. The latter, sensing that everything was tottering beneath him and that Charles I himself was headed for a fall, proved unreliable. Charles I had an intense desire for peace, a two-fold peace: domestic peace, by granting to each of the separate nationalities-Czech, Slav, Hungarian, and German-an equal area and an autonomy of very broad rights; and peace with foreign countries as well. The young emperor was not only prepared to renounce all annexations, despite the fact that Serbia and Romania were then in the hands of the Austro-German forces, but was also ready to grant his Balkan adversaries important territorial concessions. To Italy, too, which up to then had achieved little on the battlefield, he would cede the Italian-speaking part of the Tyrol. To Serbia, responsible for the assassination of the Austrian crown prince but now thoroughly whipped, its government having taken refuge at Corfu, he was willing to grant broad access to the Adriatic Sea.

Generous almost to the point of naiveté, Charles I was ready to offer still more to the Allies, who at that time were at a decided disadvantage on every front. Taking the initiative of offering peace was fraught with risk for Charles. The Germans were watching him, and they were much stronger than he was. They had the power to crush Austria in twenty-four hours. Up to then, the Austrians had been dependent on the constant help of the Germans. Left on their own in 1914, they had been beaten in Serbia, indeed chased out of Belgrade. It had required the intervention of German and Bulgarian divisions to send Pashich packing off to Corfu in the Adriatic. In Galicia, when Brusilov had overrun them, captured 25,000 kilometers of territory, taken hundreds of thousands of prisoners, and been on the point of bursting through into Hungary, it was the German army again that had saved the Austrians from disaster. Even in Romania, it was General Mackensen who had conquered Bucharest, not an Austro-Hungarian general. The Germans thus had some rightful claims on the regime in Vienna, all the more so because without the untimely steps of Austria in 1914, Germany almost certainly would not have been dragged into the war. By running the risk of antagonizing the Kaiser, Charles I showed commendable courage. The Allies should surely have given immediate consideration to these actions on the part of Charles I, especially since he had not entrusted the negotiations to dubious underlings, but to his own brothers-in-law, who were officers in the Allied armies. The emperor sent his meddlesome mother-in-law, Maria Josepha, to Neuchâtel in Switzerland to meet her two sons, Sixtus and Xavier

de Bourbon-Parma, and to charge them with the imperial peace mission. An offer to meet made to enemies does not necessarily obligate one side to reveal its hand, to commit itself in advance, and list its concessions, while the other remains silent and presents a countenance as inscrutable as the sphinx. The two Belgian officers upon whom the emperor was ready to rely had brought along preliminary demands drafted by the Allies which were very severe, indeed almost insolent in the light of the fact that the French and the British had just suffered terrible defeats in Artois, in Flanders, and in Champagne, and had left several hundred thousand men lying dead on the battlefield. The preparatory position of the Entente was brutally frank. Any conditions preliminary to a peace acceptable to the Entente must include the following indispensable demands: (1) The restitution of Alsace-Lorraine to France without compensation of any kind on the latter's part. (2) The re-establishment of Belgium (3) The restoration of Serbia with the addition of Albania. (4) The restoration of Constantinople to Russia.

These were enormous demands, which Charles I had to accept before negotiations could be admitted even in principle. The more so in that in 1916 no part of Alsace-Lorraine had yet been reconquered by the French; on the contrary, the Germans were occupying the ten wealthiest departments of France; moreover, the Serbians no longer had possession of a square centimeter of their territory; and the Russians had been unable to send a single warship to Constantinople, while the Allies had been completely thwarted when they tried to reach the city by way of the Dardanelles. The astonishing thing was that amid all these considerable claims, there was not the slightest allusion to the booty the Italians were to get, although the Allies, by the secret Treaty of London in 1915, had nonetheless promised them the Tyrol and millions of new citizens in Europe and Asia. Nor was there any question of what the Albanians might think about being delivered to the Serbians, or the Turks about being delivered to the Russians. It was a demand that the peoples of the Adriatic and the Bosphorus merely be put on the block, and not be consulted at all. Where, then, were the famous self-determination principles which had been trumpeted so virtuously? Charles I did not allow himself to be discouraged in the face of these exaggerated demands. He sent a reply which was in large measure an acceptance to the two princes, who returned to Neuchâtel: he was in agreement with regard to Alsace-Lorraine and Belgium. With regard to the territory of the South Slays occupied by his troops, he proposed the creation of an autonomous kingdom consisting of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Austrian territory before 1914), Serbia (by then already captured), Albania, and Montenegro, "existing on its own, but within the framework of an Austrian federation which for centuries has proven its worth as a unifying body." That last proposal was not final. It could be discussed. The function of a conference is discussion. Emperor Charles I had been conciliatory in the extreme. His initial concessions were enormous, since he was a member of a military coalition in a victorious position dealing with an Allied military coalition which in 1916 had reaped nothing but humiliating and terribly bloody defeats from Flanders to Gallipoli. But he was unaware

that the Allies he was appealing to were bound by a series of secret and often contradictory treaties which bound them to deliver extravagant spoils to their confederates. No honest negotiations could alter these arrangements. Prince Sixtus, after several trips back and forth to Neuchâtel, saw Poincaré in Paris. He got in touch with Briand as well. After meeting those two, Xavier and Sixtus then went to see Emperor Charles I in person. In great secrecy and at great risk, Charles went to meet his two brothers-in-law in Luxembourg-two Belgian officers in civilian clothes, in territory occupied by the Germans. The Allies still believed then (March 22-23, 1917) that they would win the battle of Artois, where instead they were about to be ground up like a round of beef. "I want peace, I want it at any price," said the young emperor of Austria-Hungary. He declared himself willing, after the initial basis of agreement had been reached with the Allies, to put as much pressure as he could on Wilhelm II to take part in the negotiations. Otherwise he would not hesitate to sign a separate peace. Charles I would go yet further. Verbal offers might be misinterpreted or even disbelieved. He seated himself at a desk and there, in the town of Luxembourg, where he risked at any moment being found out and seeing brothers-in-law arrested, wrote on March 24, 1917 a three-page letter committing his proposals to paper. In that handwritten letter, Charles I heaped civilities upon his adversaries: "The traditional bravery of the French army is admirable," he wrote. He felt "deep sympathy" for France. It was "just to give her back Alsace-Lorraine." Belgium's rights "must be fully restored." As for Serbia, he was no longer speaking of a federation but was ready to accord her not only complete independence, but "equitable and natural access to the Adriatic" as well as broad economic concessions. All that Austria asked was that Serbia, enlarged and enriched at her expense, should no longer tolerate on her soil such anti-Austrian criminal organizations as the Black Hand, which had been so conspicuous at Sarajevo. This was an entirely understandable request. Pashich would be so impressed by the scope of these proposals that he would send emissaries to Switzerland to discuss them. To soften up the Austrians, he would even have his ex-confederate, Colonel Dimitrievich, shot. The document written by Charles I, which was of potentially decisive consequence to Europe, is now available to the world. De Launay, the famous Belgian historian, has published it in its entirety. Had it been taken into consideration in 1917, the lives of several million people might have been saved, and Central Europe would not have become the white world's great land of injustice in 1919, and the most menacing colonial territory of the USSR twenty-six years later. On March 31, 1917, Prince Sixtus saw Poincaré again. Poincaré continued to equivocate, but nevertheless thought he could no longer leave his Allies in ignorance of the facts. At that time the French president of the council-there were four different ones in 1917 up to the time Clemenceau came in and cleaned house-was Alexandre Ribot. He was an old fellow, whose nerves were shot. He peered owlishly at anyone he was talking to from behind glasses as yellow as a couple of lemons, which he was forever wiping clumsily. What he feared most was not the Germans, but that his own parliament that might lash out at him. The announcement of peace negotiations meant risking a parliamentary rebuke. What if they turned his old bones

out of the presidential chair? He refused to see Prince Sixtus, despite his being an Allied officer and the bearer of peace. It was still necessary, however, to inform the Allies and warn Lloyd George. There the terms of the problem were already completely changed. For Britain, what counted was not Strasbourg, or Brussels, or the Dalmatian coast; it was the German fleet and the German colonies. Charles I had not included them in his basket of gifts. Then there were the Italians. On April 18, 1917, at St. Jean de Maurienne, Lloyd George and Ribot had confirmed and amplified the 1916 Treaty of London. They'd had to deal with Minister Sonnino. The only thing that interested Sonnino in a peace with Austria was getting Trentino, Trieste and the eastern shore of the Adriatic. That was what the French and the British has promised Italy to induce her to enter the war. Nothing less would satisfy her. The indefatigable Prince Sixtus started off on his way again to a meeting with an envoy of Charles I at Zug, in Switzerland and a second meeting at Lausanne. Finally, though an Allied officer, he proceeded secretly to Vienna on May 8, 1917 to see Emperor Charles. From the Hofburg he brought back the emperor's agreement drafted by the minister of foreign affairs, Count Czernin, "accepting the principle of an exchange of territories with Italy." So an initial proposal was offered there as well. Sonnino, with his considerable cleverness, was trying for further concessions, which as a matter of fact had already been offered in 1915, when Prince von Bülow had attempted to halt Italy's entry into the war. That was not the tragedy. Charles I had asked that in exchange for numerous concessions he be guaranteed the integrity of what would be left of Austria after losing at least Bosnia-Herzegovina, Trieste, and Trentino. The naive emperor did not suspect that powerful Masonic and anti-clerical forces within the French government did not intend Austria-Hungary, the most important Catholic country of Europe, to be in existence after the hostilities. Secret agreements had already been made that would carve her up, dismember her provinces, and barter away millions of her inhabitants. "Once this basis of agreement is accepted," Charles I reiterated to Prince Sixtus, "Austria-Hungary will be able to sign a separate peace." Were there any obstacles? Yes, there were. The French translation made by the prince was questionable; it did not seem to correspond to the text of Vienna drafted in German. It was possible that Prince Sixtus had embellished the offer a bit, which negotiators are apt to do but such misunderstandings were usual at the start of negotiations: negotiations were made to remedy such things, to make everything clear. On the Allied side, especially on the side of the French, everything could easily and rapidly be brought into harmony. But Ribot had clamped his big yellow spectacles onto his nose. He was going to sabotage everything. Why? In a month it would be clear. Sixtus proceeded to London. He saw Lloyd George and the king, and discussed the limits of the possible peace: Germany included? Or a separate peace with Austria alone? To decide that, Lloyd George proposed a meeting between the British and the French at Compiègne. That Allied conference would never take place. France would not reply, and consequently Britain would not attend. Ribot had done his best to scuttle it even before Lloyd George set out on his journey. He had hoisted himself up on his creaky old limbs at the rostrum of the French assembly to launch

this cowardly and provocative denunciation: "They will come to ask peace, not hypocritically as they do today in this shifty and circuitous manner, but openly and on terms worthy of France" (applause). "Hypocritically" and in "a shifty manner" were strong words when the Austrian emperor himself and officers of the Belgian army had offered everything and risked everything with naive sincerity. Thus the French minister publicly committed an infamous deed, not only offering a scarcely disguised insult to Charles I, but informing the emperor of Germany that his fellow monarch of Austria-Hungary had proposed peace negotiations to the Allies behind his back. A bit later Clemenceau would go still further. The unfortunate Charles I, in order to escape the wrath of William II, issued the denial that is standard in diplomatic affairs. Clemenceau, when he had become president of the council, would read to the assembly Charles' secret letter with the obvious aim of creating a fatal estrangement between his two enemies. It was a base move that wrecked any chance of future peace negotiations with Austria. Why did Ribot, "that old malefactor," as Prince Sixtus would call him, and Clemenceau after him, allow themseves to sink so low? In the first place, they were no longer in a position to discuss an equitable peace, since half a dozen secret treaties, signed by their colleagues and the British, had put up for auction some hundreds of thousands of square kilometers of Europe and tens of millions of her people. Only an overwhelming victory would make it possible for them to honor their commitments. Any other issue of the war would bring them insoluble problems, starting with the delection of their dearly bought allies. Austria was also the target of a relentless conspiracy, that of Freemasonry, for two centuries a mortal enemy of that vast Catholic country. Freemasonry wanted Austria-Hungary's hide, wanted it rended, lacerated, in pieces. Ribot was one of the most important figures in French Freemasonry. Benes, the Czech, was the most important figure in the Freemasonry of Central Europe. He laid claim to the entire northern part of the Austro- Hungarian empire with such voracity that in 1919, with the Masonry of the entire world behind him, he would swallow up more non-Czechs than Czechs. Precisely at the very moment of these negotiations, a world congress of Freemasons met in Paris, the seat of the sinister Grand Orient, on June 28, 1917 to "create a society founded on the eternal principles of Masonry." Austria-Hungary was the exact opposite of that society. During the latter part of June, 1917 in Paris, Freemasonry passed a death sentence on Austria-Hungary proclaiming that minimum conditions of peace required the independence of Bohemia and the "liberation" of the diverse nationalities of Austria-Hungary, "goals which could not be realized without the annihilation of the Austro-Hungarian empire." Just three days before the rabidly anti-Catholic Masonic congress had been held, Ribot had been bent on bringing about the downfall of Charles I. Ribot's speech, indeed, had been the forward to it. It was the choice appetizer preceding the banquet at which the conspirators of the left would devour Catholic Austria-Hungary, prepared for them in advance with malignant gloating by old Ribot. Astonishingly, the Germans, who might well have considered themselves justified in angrily reproaching Austria-Hungary, their ally, for having secretly treated with the enemy, were extremely reserved in their protests. Why? Because they had done

the same thing. Two officers of the Belgian army had been the liaison agents of Charles I. By a strange coincidence, the agents of the Reich were Brussels civilians. Both of them had been warmly encouraged, and at the same time, by King Albert I, the same who had been anxious to give his support to the socialist Camille Huysmans when he, as president of the Second International, was endeavoring to call a peace conference at Stockholm. After the war the Belgian king was everywhere held to have been the model ally. A statue was erected to him at Paris in which the warrior faithful beyond all others was advancing on horseback towards victory. In truth, King Albert distrusted the war aims of the Allies from the first day of the war to the last. He never allied himself with them completely. He wished to remain in his historic role of a neutral, knowing-history had taught him well-the cupidity of both sides, which were always ready to occupy and use his country. Even in 1914 he had refused to join up with the routed French and British armies in the south. On the contrary, he had withdrawn in the direction of Antwerp. After the autumn of 1914 he had clung to the Yser, a little Belgian stream, stubbornly refusing to leave his country. He did not believe a single perfidious word of the fine speeches of the Allies: liberty, justice, rights of man, which they used to cover up their own interests. He had no choice but to be guided solely by the interests of his country. The interest of Belgium, wedged between two powerful nations, and to whom foreign wars could bring nothing but grief, could only be Peace. Albert I had let his two officers of Bourbon-Parma travel to Switzerland, to Luxembourg, to Vienna, to London, and to Paris. He had seen them return empty-handed. However, another possibility had arisen, this one stemming from the Germans and launched in Brussels, his occupied captial.

The new negotiations involved, on the Belgian side, three principals. The first was Cardinal Mercier, the primate of Belgium. He was a tall, emaciated philosopher, a sovereign spirit, of supreme dignity and majesty. As a young student, I would be discovered by him. He was my first teacher. I still see him scrutinizing me, bright-eyed like a watching bird, majestic despite his gauntness, like a Michelangelo prophet. The second negotiator was a Frenchwomen, a Rochefoucault become Belgian through her marriage to a member of the house of Merode, in 1914 headed by a count, today by a prince. The third was a man of business, the benzine king of Belgium, Baron Evence Coppée. The German who would be the decisive element in these other secret, semiofficial negotiations was the Baron van der Lanken. As an embassy attache, he had known the young Paul de la Rochefoucault. The fortunes of war gained him a key post in the military administration of Belgium. The Countess of Merode, concerned for all who suffered the misfortunes or the rigors of the occupation, had many a time spoken to van der Lanken, much as she had done in Paris before the hostilities. In particular, she had got him to accept a petition from Cardinal Mercier requesting pardons for two men negotiations, their envoy was officially authorized to make an initial pardoned seventeen, every Belgian then awaiting execution. It was thus that the Belgian primate, wishing to thank the German diplomat, had gone to see him at the home of the Countess de Merode. Then for the first time

they spoke of the possibility of re-establishing peace. The cardinal challenged the representative of the Reich to assist in negotiations between Germany and the Allies. The German took the cardinal at his word and set off for Berlin. In October 1916 he saw the cardinal again, who, after hearing him, expressed his dissatisfaction. A new trip to Berlin at the beginning of 1917 resulted in a meeting at Bad Kreuznach between the chancellor of the Reich, the secretary of state for foreign affairs, Marshal von Hindenburg, and General Ludendorff. This select assembly, at the end of April 1917, agreed to the concession of certain territories of the Reich southwest of Alsace and in French-speaking Lorraine. It wasn't yet at the point of the French army entering Metz to the sound of trumpets, but a trend was taking shape. It must not be forgotten that in the spring of 1917, the Germans had the upper hand; yet they were prepared to cede some territory. "When I made contact with the government of the Reich," Lanken later wrote, "it appeared straight off that Berlin attached the greatest importance to this endeavor. Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg and the secretary gave me encouragement at every point." A more astonishing piece of information: "It was the same with Field Marshal von Hindenburg and with General Ludendorff, otherwise so difficult to approach. As is fitting to note at once, during the entire course of this affair General Ludendorff never failed to ask for information about it and concerned himself with the success of what I was doing." That was not, to be sure, total approval, but it was the manifestation of a desire on the part of the Germans to negotiate. When during the entire course of the war was there any such attitude on the part of the Allied authorities? When did a French or British politician or military man ever make a similar gesture? The Germans might have said no for fear of having their enemies say that they had realized they were going to lose the war. Yet, even before the negotiations, their was envoy officially authorized to make an initial concession unconditionally. A clever negotiator, once he had that thread in his hands, would no doubt pull out more of the skein. The name of that negotiator was even mentioned. Baron van der Lanken had indicated he would begin the negotiations between the Germans and the Allies with one of his Paris acquaintances from before the war, a man who was surely the most ingratiating politician in France: Briand. Between the two world wars, Aristide Briand became the best known French politician in Europe, his voice grave and softly harmonious, his mustaches hanging down like a drooping bush, poorly dressed in skimpily made business suits, and dropping ashes everywhere from his everlasting cigarettes. In June 1917, he had resigned from his position of prime minister three months too soon. Despite that he could be the perfect unofficial delegate of the Allied authorities. The Countess de Merode, having obtained a passport from van der Lanken, left for Paris where she immediately met with Briand. She delivered a proposal for an interview with Lanken in Switzerland. Briand immediately went, on June 19, to confer with Poincaré. The latter was not very enthusiastic. Nevertheless, he authorized Briand to see van der Lanken. Meanwhile, a second Belgian démarche had given impetus to the action of the princess at Paris. A second emissary had arrived in France to further support van der Lanken's proposals. He had not wanted to act, however, without first receiving the consent

of the head of the Belgian government, M. de Broqueville, who, like his king, had taken refuge at Sainte Adresse, near Le Havre. He sent them the letter from van der Lanken, offering to meet with an Allied emissary. Briand, Coppée, and Broqueville planned to meet in Paris at the Ritz.

Broqueville was affirmative: "The German proposals are of a serious nature." Briand was impressed. He made up his mind and got ready. But alas, France was a democracy: the Ribot government fell. A new government was formed by Painlevé, a confused but honest mathematician, who was better at juggling logarithms and hypotenuses than diplomatic subtleties. It was necessary to start preparing the way all over again. Coppée, Briand, Poincaré, and the new prime minister weighed the possibility of negotiation. "We have to go all the way," Painlevé concluded. Poincaré was still cool to the idea, but didn't oppose it. He was a man who rarely stood in opposition to things: He cast his net, stood stock-still, waited for the other party to get caught. Ribot, who had already torpedoed the peace project with Emperor Charles I, remained in the cabinet as minister of the interior, which was not very reassuring. Briand outlined a plan of negotiations that went further than the German proposal, as was only to be expected. Instead of a part of Alsace-Lorraine, he laid claim to all of it, and he demanded war preparations as well; on the other hand, "France will not raise the question of the left bank of the Rhine nor the political and economic freedom of the German people." As in poker, both of the two parties had thoroughly studied their cards. The obstacles presented were by no means insurmountable. This sort of preliminary was usual in even the most modest negotiations. Coppée, informed before returning to Brussels, saw van der Lanken. Briand himself proposed September 22, 1917 as the date of the meeting in Switzerland. Coppée confirmed to him in writing the confidence he now had in their success. "This turn of events had given the Countess de Merode and me an absolute conviction that Germany is ready to make the greatest possible concessions, so that the withdrawal from the occupied territory, indemnities and reparations, as well as the restitution of Alsace-Lorraine to France, may be envisaged with a virtual certainty of success." Coppée had reason to express these views. On September 11, 1917 the Kaiser himself had presided over a meeting at the imperial palace of Bellevue, decisions of which went far beyond the concessions granted at Bad Kreuznach. All the top military and civilian leaders had attended the meeting. The Germans, needless to say, were not going to give up everything before their emissary had even talked to Briand. But if van der Lanken was to be believed, they would have gone a long way. "My plan," he explained in his memoirs (p. 223), "was to get Briand, by the manner in which I listened to him, to lay out his views as plainly as possible, and to a certain extent to learn his final 'price.' Then to get to Berlin the fastest way, press for an immediate answer, and get it back to Briand in Switzerland with all possible speed." DeLaunay, the Belgian historian, who scrutinized with a magnifying glass every passage of the dossier and interviewed every possible witness, sums up the convictions of the Kaiser's unofficial emissary: "Lanken assured Coppée and the Countess de Merode that he had received orders to conclude the peace and that if the proposals he was

charged to make to Briand were deemed insufficient, he would immediately ask Berlin for new instructions." (Histoire de la diplomatie secrète, p. 84). He would later add: "Given the weariness of the belligerents, a solution could have been found to the problem of Alsace-Lorraine." On September 21, 1917, the eve of the meeting with Briand, Baron van der Lanken detrained at Ouchy-Lausanne and put up at the Hotel du Chateau. The Countess de Merode and Baron Coppée were already in town, at the Beau Rivage Hotel. "Lanken," de Launay explains, "expressed his conviction that the proposed interview would be favorable to a peaceful decision. He confirmed to them that he'd had contact with the German general staff again and that the negotiations were beginning auspiciously." The meeting of the next day was to take place at the villa of a French general who was a friend of Briand. They waited in vain for Briand to arrive. On September 23, Baron van der Lanken, empty-handed, took up his valise, shocked at this evasion on the part of the French negotiator, without an excuse or even an explanation. It was Ribot, the Freemason, who had made it all miscarry. With honeyed words he had put the question to the British government: "Wouldn't it be a good idea to avoid the trap set for M. Briand?" What reply could the foreign secretary of the United Kingdom have given except that it was necessary to avoid falling into a trap? What trap? As with Vienna's proposal, the German proposal had been properly and courageously brought forward by impeccable intermediaries under the aegis of the Allied government of Belgium. "What seems to us unspeakable," DeLaunay wrote, "was Poincaré's weakness, Ribot's bad faith ... Millions of men were still to die for two Alsatian fortresses." All the attempts for peace which were still to follow, including the one entrusted to Noullens, the French ambassador at St. Petersburg, would routinely miscarry, one after another. The plans of Freemasonry were to be pursued implacably, however great the massacre. Germany and Austria-Hungary were to be annihilated.

CHAPTER XXIX

President Wilson, "Colonel" House

It is impossible to speak of the many significant peace attempts of the First World War, all of them failures, without mentioning the peace negotiations of the Americans, or more precisely of Woodrow Wilson, the president of the United States. Those negotiations, too, failed. But they were of a quite special nature; and they were going to change the face of the world. In the first place, they were the earliest of all the attempts, since they were begun as early as 1914, before the start of the war. Their sincerity quickly became suspect. They were fairly objective in 1914-from May to July in the first instance, then in the month of September after the great German victories in France and Prussia-and they even revealed a certain tendency to acknowledge that Wilhelm II, the emperor of Germany, was the only one who desired peace. From 1915 to 1917 they would slightly, then strongly favor the Allies, although that was rather hypocritically camouflaged because it was imperative not to displease the American voters, who were 90 per cent for neutrality. The secret adherence of Wilson's government to the Allies would end in the spring of 1917, with the entry of the United States into the war. The great and total evolution of the war

dates from that point, when it was transformed from a European war to a world war. The paltry French-British-Russian-German quarrels would be left behind. On the one hand the tsarist power would collapse, and Communism would take its place. On the other hand, a giant America would hurl the enormous weight of its power, untried and until then almost unknown, onto the scales of world politics. Intervention by the United States would change everything. It would give an entirely new orientation to the European war then bogged down in Flanders. It superimposed a completely new world of elemental power on the death throes of an anemic Europe, a Europe that was stupidly destroying itself as a world power. In a few decades, two giant land masses would bring to an end two thousand years of European expansion. From 1917 on, the war of Europe was no longer anything but civil war; the world was changing forever. There is no explaining the First World War without an examination in depth of the role that the United States of America assumed between 1914 and 1918. Who at that time was the driving force in the United States? Everyone spoke of Wilson, who quickly became considered the master of humanity's destiny. On the other hand, few speak of Colonel House, a secret, almost mythical figure, who was the all-powerful mentor of President Wilson. Who was this shadowy Colonel House? Who, indeed, was Wilson?

* * *

Woodrow Wilson, the president of the United States, was an austere and strict Calvinist, the son, grandson, and son-in-law of Presbyterian ministers. "He said his prayers on his knees morning and night throughout his life. He read the Bible every day. He wore out two or three Bibles in the course of his life. He said grace before every meal." (Bullitt, President Wilson, p.36). Bullitt has left an impressive portrait of this "puny fellow" with the "big soft mouth": He had light gray eyes and lackluster blond hair. He was thin, pale, and weak. His eyesight was extraordinarily deficient. He was hardly out of his baby clothes when he had to wear glasses. Moreover, from infancy on he had intestinal trouble which plagued him throughout his life. He was coddled by his father, his mother, and his two older sisters, but these troubles persisted, giving him migraine headaches and stomach ailments. He was so sickly that his parents didn't send him to school. He didn't learn the alphabet until he was nine years old and didn't know how to read until he was eleven." His homely features were made still more plain by the eyeglasses riding on his prominent nose and by his astonishingly bad teeth. Although he never smoked, they were mottled with caries, so that when he smiled, brown and blue stains appeared amid flashes of gold. He had a livid complexion, with unhealthy red blotches. His legs were too short for his body, so that he looked more distinguished seated than standing. He was so poorly informed about international affairs that he couldn't tell one country from another on a map. Parsimonious, he was horrified at the cost of a cable and hesitated a long time before sending one. His only diversions were billiards and proper family reading sessions in the evening.

Looked at this way, however, the portrait of Woodrow Wilson does not adhere strictly to the realities, or as least it is not complete, because throughout his

career Wilson was simply a screen for others. The real master of the United States in those days, right up to the fateful Versailles peace conference was not Wilson but the man who owned him outright and had made him president of the United States and partner in 1917 of the Allies in the First World War. This mentor of Wilson's was a mysterious "colonel" who did not occupy any official post whatsoever. Secret, insinuating, he worked strictly behind the scenes and under cover. He was not even a colonel. His name was Edward Mandell House. "The public was mystified, that's for certain," wrote Charles Seymour, the well-known American history professor. House's father, of Jewish origins, had come from England; his middle name was that of a Jewish merchant who was a friend of his father. His father, on arriving in America, had first been a Mexican citizen. Then he had fought to make Texas into a republic. Astutely, he had taken his pay for that collaboration in land. Later he parted company with the federal government to the North, then threw in his lot with it anew. "Four different flags," he laconically said. The family became very rich through the trade in cotton by sea during the "somber and stormy" nights of the War between the States. Arms trade and munitions made them money as well. These activities were capped by the purchase of an entire block in the city of Galveston. The son, Wilson's future manager, was raised there in an environment of gunpowder. "My brother," he related, "one day had half of his face blown off. He remained disfigured for the rest of his life. I don't know how I managed not to kill myself a hundred times over." In school he carried a little pocket arsenal: "In addition to a revolver, I had a big knife. Those weapons let me keep my comrades at a respectful distance." He spent some time in the mountains "where he could do some shooting."

When he was seventeen years old he fell in love with another kind of fighting: political battles, and became a sort of secret agent for William Tilden, the Democratic presidential candidate in 1876. "I ended up realizing that two or three senators and a like number of representatives, in concert with the president, directed the affairs of the country all by themselves." In twenty-five years he would succeed in reserving the direction of the country for himself, not just sharing it with two or three senators. Was he at least a normal being? "One day," he recounted, "when I was soaring very high on a swing, one of the ropes broke and I fell on my head." Did it crack? In any event, the rope of the political swing did not break. His father died and left him a large fortune made during the Civil War, and House set out to conquer Texas politically.

Texas in those days, as he described it, was "a frontier state where the law was in the service of the individual with the keenest eye and the quickest hand, and where you died with your boots on." One day, in a bar in Colorado, a giant of a man insulted him: "I grabbed my six-shooter and cocked it, but the bartender jumped over the counter and threw himself between us. Five more seconds and I'd have killed my man."

Thus prepared, he embarked on the career which would one day make him the man who directed the thinking of America's president. House became the campaign director for a gubernatorial candidate of the Democratic party, a

man named Hogg, who was elected primarily because of House's drive. "That campaign," House recalled, "was a real battle." Thanks to Hogg, House was abruptly promoted from a Colorado barroom brawler to the rank of colonel. Afterwards he would never be called anything but "the colonel." Colonel of what? Of nothing. He had never passed a single hour of his life in a military barracks, but Governor Hogg had the power at that time in Texas to name anyone at all an honorary colonel.

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Texas grew too small for him. "I'm beginning to get tired of it," he sighed. "Go to the front lines! That's where you belong from now on!" Hogg told him. The front was the East Coast; it was New York. His attention was drawn to the governor of New Jersey, a man named Woodrow Wilson. According to police records, he hadn't killed or robbed anyone; his speeches, very academic, were oiled with an abundance of the moral platitudes so dear to the voters, and he was said to be easily managed. Prime presidential material! proposed House, his choice made, immediately mobilized his agents: "I prop to divide the forty Texans into four squads and to entrust each squad with the assault on one of the doubtful Southern states." He set up propaganda centers in every city, as would nowadays be done in the launching of a new brand of detergent. On November 5, 1912, Woodrow Wilson, riding on the shoulders of Colonel House, was elected to the presidency. Wilson formed his first cabinet, and House made it a point not to accept any post. But his hand was everywhere, invisible, and quick as lightning. At the end of 1913, when Wilson sent him to see Wilhelm II, he had armed him with this simple and astonishing introduction: "In the United States, he is the Power behind the Throne." It was Wilson himself who spelled power with a capital P. It was in that capacity that Wilhelm II was going to receive him, and it was from that time we date the first attempt of the U.S. to avert the European war. That "Power" was going to become the supreme power not only of the United States, but, the following year, of the First World War. Without the secret but persistent intrigues of this manipulator, there would not have been any Treaty of Versailles, still less the Second World War, the poisonous mushroom spawned out of the rottenness of the preceding one. Colonel House was the key figure of 1914-1918.

In the Europe of those years no one even suspected House's existence, apart from a few heads of state and, in 1919, a dozen leaders of the so- called "peace" conference. Clemenceau in private would call him the "supercivilized escapee from the wilds of Texas." For the world as a whole, there was only Wilson. Wilson would be received at Paris in January 1919 as the most important luminary in the world. The man who was really the most important, however, and had been since 1913, was the other one, the shadow, for whom a hotel room sufficed in Berlin, in London, or in Paris. In 1917 and 1918, in furtive silence, House would bring to the Allies, those devourers of men, two million fine American lads, not to mention billions of dollars and prodigious quantities of raw materials. House gained his mastery over Wilson all the more swiftly because the latter had always lived phenomenally aloof from European problems.

"Mr. Wilson," Colonel House quite crudely explained, "had no experience with affairs of state." He added: "The attitude of President Wilson with regard to the European situation bordered on indifference." That indifference was natural enough. The platform on which Wilson had made it to the presidency of the United States would have given one to believe that the world didn't exist beyond the Potomac. "The Democratic platform," House noted, "does not contain a single word on the subject of foreign relations or problems, except for one allusion to the Philippines. " That indifference was in truth shared by nearly all of America. At the beginning of Wilson's presidency," House frankly related, "there were few citizens of the United States who could claim any knowledge of European affairs of state or who had any interest in them." (Intimate Papers of Colonel House, vol. 1, p. 272) As for diplomats, the incoming President Wilson, who took office in 1913, was ill-served in a way scarcely possible to imagine. All the important diplomatic posts of the United States were distributed after the elections almost by auction among the electoral supporters of the new president, whatever their degree of ignorance.

"I am being swamped by office seekers," House moaned. "Job applicants are driving me crazy! Six hundred employment requests for a single post. Everybody wants something. All the eccentrics in the country are at my heels. A hungry pack," he concluded. House had to pass on the candidates for federal judgeships. Two were too fat. Another had no chin. There was only one left who was presentable. "I still have someone to recommend," House went on to say, patient as Job, "but he has a big wart behind his ear, and I shall recommend to him that he take care not to show that side of his head."

In the appointment of new ambassadors-the proceding ones, the Republicans, having been swept aside like empty food cans-the precedure was no different. "The people running the party saw nothing in the post of ambassador but the means of giving an appointment to political figures whose support it was important to hang onto." (House, I, 210) Wilson had finally sent as ambassador to Berlin a judge who had got the position from House when he himself recognized that he had no chance of obtaining it on merit. As for the new American ambassador to London, he didn't know even the rudiments of the job. "That man," House tells us almost jeeringly, "asked Mr. Bryan (the secretary of state) to be so kind as to reserve a place for him in the kindergarten so that he might learn the essentials of his job as quickly as possible. Bryan laughingly replied: 'First I'd have to learn them myself."' The ambassadorial candidate for kindergarten was named Gerard. When he had arrived in London, he'd had to resolve "the infernal questions of dress," and was condemned to wear knee-breeches to ceremonies at the court. "I find," this impromptu diplomat wrote, "that it is a laborious task taking a duchess to dinner." The Berlin staff as well had not found it easy to fit in at the imperial salons. "We Americans," Gerard, the new ambassador, wrote to House, describing his first trip through Berlin in the retinue of the court, "had rather a lugubrious air in our black tails. We must have looked like a burial procession in those carriages all enclosed in glass." They were called "the black crows" there. These newly appointed diplomats had all

set out aimlessly, to Berlin as to London, without having received a single line of instructions from Wilson. "A short time after the appointment of Mr. Page to the embassy to the court of St. James," House recounted, "I asked Wilson if he had given the new ambassador any additional instructions. The president replied in the negative." As the British prime minister would one day say, "They were skating on thin ice."

Chapter 23

More Balkan Intrigue

Italy's entry into the war was no more than a small beginning. After Italy, some twenty other countries would be snared in the traps set out by Messrs. Poincaré and Asquith. Meanwhile, the Germans and the Austrians, on their guard, had won over another Balkan country, Bulgaria. Bulgaria's strategic position was important. If she entered on the side of the Germans, she would immediately assure them and the Austrians contact with their new allies, the Turks. On the other hand, if she swung to the side of the Allies, she could be the decisive base for the offensive of the Russians against Constantinople, their chief objective. She could form a geographical link for the armies of the tsar with those of Serbia, their satellite in the Balkans. The idea of having an additional adversary, one the size of Bulgaria at their throat was bound to cause enormous worry to the Russians, who had been somewhat relieved by Italy's entry into the war. Bulgaria was thus, for friends and enemies alike, a country whose collaboration seemed essential. Bulgaria's leaders knew it. In August 1914 the country at first stayed quietly in its corner. Officially Bulgaria remained neutral - it was a time to see who would offer the most. Just as Sonnino had done on behalf of Italy and as the Romanians, who would be the last to decide, would do! The Bulgarians coldly calculated the advantages offered them by the rival bidders. They felt themselves to be Slays. But they also had the blood of Mongols and Turks in their veins; and crossbred as they were with Greeks and even Germans, they were now for Constantinople and now against her. One of their kings had married the daughter of the Byzantine emperor, but then again, Basil II, called the "killer of Bulgarians," had taken 15,000 of them prisoners and pulled out their eyes as casually as if he were going through their pockets, 900 years before. And Bulgars have long memories.

In October of 1912, Hartwig, the Russian ambassador in Belgrade, had organized the first Balkan war. He had launched the Greeks, the Montenegrins, the Serbs, and the Bulgarians in an assault on the decrepit Turks. The Bulgarians flattened the Turks at Kirk-Kilisse, at Lule Burgas, and finally at Adrianople. They

approached the minarets of Constantinople. That was too much for the tsar of Russia. King Ferdinand of Bulgaria was not an unpretentious person. Just like his great patron in St. Petersburg, he dreamed of capturing the capital of the Bosphorus and of proclaiming himself emperor there. Of course that wouldn't do at all for the tsar. Constantinople was a Russian monopoly, a fief that the tsar had reserved for himself. The Serbians, too, were seized by jealousy to see that there were now two strong countries in the Balkans, when they definitely intended that there should never be more than one: their own. The result was the Treaty of London in May 1913, which legalized Bulgaria's conquests. It had hardly been signed when the second Balkan war broke out in June, the following month. All the peoples between the Danube and the Aegean Seas had been whipped up by the Russian government, and they fell on ambitious Bulgaria tooth and nail. The Romanians, the Greeks, the Montenegrins, the Serbs, descended upon Bulgaria. Even the Turks, who had been the common enemy a year earlier, joined in. The Bulgarians were easily defeated. In August 1913, the Treaty of Bucharest stripped them nearly to the skin: in the west, the Serbians took Macedonia; the Romanians took Dobrudja from Bulgaria in the north; and in the south the Bulgarians had to surrender to the Turks Adrianople, the Hadrianopolis of two thousand years ago, founded by Hadrian, the native of Seville who had become emperor of Rome. After that beating, Bulgaria, however completely Slav she might be, no longer harbored feelings of solidarity, but rather enmity, towards the Serbians, who had wasted no time carrying out frightful massacres of the Macedonians, no sooner than they had been wrested from their union with the Bulgarians. As for the Russian leaders, they had allowed Bulgaria to be nearly annihilated to assure their own claims on Constantinople, Bulgaria no longer saw them as protectors but as dangerous enemies.

The British and French governments wished to block without fail an alliance of Germany and Turkey, which would unite their enemies from the border of Denmark clear to the heart of Asia Minor, where British interests were dominant.

Winning over Bulgaria appealed to everybody because she had become militarily strong: the nation had at its disposal half a million soldiers who were generally known to be very good fighters. To convince Bulgaria, however, the Allies would have to guarantee absolutely the restitution of the regions that the Romanians and the Serbians had taken the year before. The French politicians favored this approach: it was easier to give away what belonged to others. Macedonia was not Alsace. With France, then, Bulgaria could easily come to an agreement - at the expense of her neighbors, as we learn from the confidential telegram of the French embassy in Bulgaria, dated November 19, 1914 (No. 99 of the archives of the ministry of foreign affairs in Paris): Bulgaria is ready to grant us her complete assistance in exchange for guaranteeing her the acquisition of Thrace as far as the Enos-Midia line and the return of all the Macedonian regions, possession of which had been promised her by the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty of 13 March 1912. By any reckoning, those restitutions cost the French less than a bottle of Calvados. But the Serbians? And the Romanians? And

the Russians? The Russian government demanded Constantinople as their chief war compensation which Bulgaria also coveted. The interests of the Bulgarians and the Russians were in absolute conflict. On the other hand, the Serbians were unconditional supporters of the Russians. They were the battering ram the Pan-Slays meant to drive into the southern flank of the Austrians. It was thanks to the Serbians and partially for the Serbians that the Russians, after the double crime of Sarajevo, triggered the European war. How could they dismantle the Serbian bastion for the benefit of the Bulgarians, their direct rivals on the Bosphorus?

No matter. The Russian Pan-Slays could no longer afford the luxury of playing swashbucklers. They were in dire straits. The Germans had trounced them severely. Their commander-in-chief, Grand Duke Nicholas, feeling lost, clamored for the intervention of other countries, Italy to start with, as we have seen. His minister of war was sending him scarcely a quarter of the artillery shells his batteries at the front needed if they were to avoid annihilation. "I ask for trainloads of ammunition and they send me trainloads of priests," the grand duke sneered. He would plainly prefer the Bulgarians to the priests. But Sazonov blocked everything: "At a pinch he would accept some partial retrocessions in Macedonia," telegraphed Ambassador Paléologue, who remained very cautious. "M. Sazonov had just put forth some other diplomatic plans." Promising King Ferdinand "some partial retrocessions" was not very much, especially since the Germans were in a position to promise a good deal more. It wouldn't cost them a pfennig to offer the Bulgarians the return of so oft partitioned Macedonia. Paris, impatient, prodded the Russians mercilessly. The Russian Pan- Slays decided to make the Bulgarians an offer, "subject to acceptance by the Serbians." It was plain that the Serbian answer would be no. Old Pashich hadn't covered up the Sarajevo killings and provoked the war of 1914 just to go soft for the benefit of his enemy of 1913. At the beginning of the negotiations of August 10, 1914, he had telegraphed his embassy in Paris: "Serbia didn't go to war three times in the last two years to bring about consequences which would make Bulgaria the dominant power in the Balkans. She prefers anything to such a humiliation." Months went by and Bulgaria, despite everything, remained fairly well disposed to the Entente. But how to convince the stubborn Serbians? France and Russia made a joint representation to Pashich. The only answer they would receive was a flat refusal: "Not one centimeter of Macedonia will become Bulgarian so long as I can prevent it."

In these negotiations Russia played a strange role. She let the Serbs know that she was not a participant in the French demarche, and that though "constrained and forced into it, in reality she disapproved the granting of any concession to the Bulgarians." If the tsarist clique paid lip service to it today, tomorrow it would do its best to destroy the agreement. On March 4, 1915 the tsar declared to his minister of war: "My decision is made: Thrace and the city of Constantinople must be incorporated into the empire." (telegram from Paléologue, No. 361) Paris multiplied her promises in vain. The French swore that what Serbia abandoned in Macedonia she would recover a hundred times over on the

Adriatic, the same gift Paris was offering to the Italians! The Serbs, sly and mistrustful, did not wish to consider concessions to Bulgaria until after they had wrested from Austria all the booty they were demanding. "No concession to Bulgaria relative to Macedonia will ever be considered by us before we have achieved the sum total of our aspirations at Austria's expense." (Pashich December 23, 1914) It was useless, therefore, for the Allies to prolong a discussin that was falling on deaf ears. "To insist would be to risk offending Serbia with no chance of success." (Poincaré, L'Invasion, p. 514) The verbosity of the Serbians would grow ever more extravagant. They would grandiloquently propose to charge right through the territory of the troublesome Bulgarians.

"We are prepared," Pashich asserted, "to occupy Bulgarian territory and thus destroy the military forces of Sofia." When some months later Pashich found himself with his backside in the waters of the Adriatic, it would be because he had asked for it.

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Having been thus spurned, it was inevitable that the Bulgarians would side with the Germans. On August 1, 1915, Colonel Gantscher brought the Bulgarians everything they had lost and more besides. They even saw to it that there was liberal bribery in Sofia, because the Balkan negotiators, as we know, always waged the noble "war of Right" with purer hearts when it was paid for in cold cash. The Bulgarian finance minister, M. Tuchev, had already accepted, with eyes half-closed, a little Berlin gratuity of four million gold marks. This very important leader helped the Germans relieve themselves of a bit of their financial surplus. Such little gifts aided comprehension. The Germans and Bulgarians understood each other better and better. The pleasant comedy of neutrality went on for another month. At the end of September 1915, the German Marshal von Mackensen, a Death's Head Hussar - whose high black kepi with skull and plumes still occupied a place of honor at his estate in the neighborhood of Stettin from which, in April 1945, I directed our battle for the Oder - mustered ten splendid German divisions south of the Danube. They would be supported by four Austro-Hungarian divisions. The vise was closing. Could the Allies not see it?

On the Austrian front, the Italian intervention had only led to mediocre results. It had been necessary to transfer only two Austro-Hungarian divisions from the Galician front to the defense of the mountains of the Tyrol. The Italians had 312 battalions at their disposal, the Austrians 147. Nevertheless, Austrian losses were limited to a few villages and a few support points. Grand Duke Nicholas, who had counted on the avalanche of 37 Italian divisions to greatly relieve his front, found himself in a worse state than ever. The Russian front had been penetrated at Görlitz on May 4, 1915, and driven back to the San. The following month, the line of the San and also that of the Dniester were overrun. On June 22, 1915 Lemberg fell. In July followed a new defeat, the capture of Warsaw in Russian Poland. In August, the Nieman line was broken: the Germans reached the Berezina, site of NapoLéon's brilliant salvation of his

retreating army. Pro-Allied historian Renouvin sums it up: "The results of the campaign were grave. The Russian armies had abandoned all of Galicia, all of Poland, all of Lithuania. At the center of the front, their retreat exceeded one hundred and fifty kilometers. They had suffered enormous losses from May to October: 151,000 killed, 683,000 wounded, and 895,000 taken prisoner - that is, nearly half of the combat effectives." (La Crise européenne, p. 311) Millions of useless conscripts vegetated in the rear depots, "rough louts" who could not even be trained because no rifles were available. In such circumstances, could Russia afford Bulgaria as an additional enemy?

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The Western Allies hadn't accomplished much more. In Artois, despite the fact that they massed 29 Anglo-French divisions against 13 German divisions, and in Champagne, where 39 French infantry divisions faced 17 divisions of the Reich, they had suffered a cruel defeat: almost twice as many dead as the Germans (250,000 against 140,000) for virtually nothing. Joffre himself had been forced to announce on October 7, 1915 "a protracted posture of defensive operations." The Anglo-French disaster at the Dardanelles and the frightful massacre of the Allied troops at Gallipoli at the end of 1915 had made it necessary to find a refuge for the survivors at Salonika. Greek neutrality was violated when the British set up a puppet leader, Venizelos, a cunning Cretan. Things were going from bad to worse for the Allies. The British were making one last official effort to try to hold the Bulgarians to their former neutrality. They had offered the Bulgarians Macedonia as a war bonus, without the knowledge of their Serbian allies, exactly the way French politicians, in August 1939, would secretly concede to the Soviets the right of passage through Poland, when the latter country was categorically opposed to it. To support his proposal, the British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, in a speech to the House of Commons, embarked on an astonishing encomium of the Bulgarians. It was October 1, 1915. The Russians were engaged in an operation that was diametrically opposed. After keeping the Allies in the dark up to the last moment, on their own initiative they presented the Bulgarians with an ultimatum, demanding that they break off diplomatic relations with the Germans, an indication of how sincere was the understanding between the Anglo-French and the Russians. One said white, and the other did black. Nothing remained for King Ferdinand of Bulgaria but to send the tsar of Russia back to his prayers. On October 6, 1915 Mackensen and the Bulgarians attacked Serbia: 300,000 soldiers in all, more than half of them Germans.

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The 250,000 Serbians, so provocative in 1914, when they had only the unprepared Austrians to face, panicked at the onslaught of the Germans. They appealed for French and British aid, but their allies would not send them so much as a handful of infantrymen. Belgrade fell the first day. Thereafter the Serbians fled towards the Adriatic. It was only after a month of unbroken rout that the Allies decided to send General Sarrail from Salonika with 80,000

British and French troops towards the last Serbian valley, almost on the border of Greece; but they didn't put to flight so much as a single Macedonian partridge. They became bogged down, then were pushed back. The routed Serbian army was unable to join up with them. The Serbs didn't reach the Adriatic and the famous Albanian coasts that had been promised to everybody until mid-December. Devoured by typhus, the Serbs no longer had either munitions or supplies. "Leba! leba!" ("Bread! Bread!"), they cried on approaching every hamlet. With them rode the old king, Peter II, in a vehicle drawn by buffaloes. Everywhere they left behind emaciated cadavers. The Italians, who had occupied Valona, drove the last survivors towards the mountains of Greece, because, for a second time, Greek territory had been violated by the Allies at Corfu. There they left Pashich shaking in his beard and already about to betray them. The miserable old fox would soon send emissaries to Switzerland to begin negotiations with the new Austro- Hungarian emperor, Charles I, and obtain pardon for the Sarajevo double assassination. As a sign of his good faith, he would have the organizer of the crime, Colonel Dimitrievich, shot as a scapegoat. The forces of the Entente would again attempt a Serbian rescue operation in the region of Dedeagach. There they would be almost surrounded by the Bulgarians. Germany now crossed the vast area between Berlin and Constantinople at will. Her specialists reinforced the Turkish troops on the Near Eastern battlefield clear to the threshold of the Suez Canal. It was there, hard by the Red Sea, that the British would now try recruiting new candidates for death - this time among the Arabs. Except for the Rumanians, who were delaying their decision, everyone in Europe who could be sent into the fire had already been tossed into the frying pan. Millions of additional soldiers were needed, workers as well. The time had come to recruit foreigners en masse.

CHAPTER XXIV

Chapter 24

Cannon Fodder from the Colonies

An enormous flood of humanity, equal in numbers to the French and British armies of 1914 (2,300,000 men in the month of October 1914) was about to pour out onto all the battlefields of the Allies, from Africa, from Asia, and from Oceania. The gleam of their countenances, yellow, copper, black, would be reflected on all the seas of the world. Not even included in these droves were the considerable armies raised in Canada, in Australia, in South Africa, etc., often with the descendants of conquered French, Irish forced laborers, and dispossessed Boers. The Boers, descendants of Dutchmen and French Huguenots, comprised half of South Africa's population. Canada's people included several million descendants of old French settlers. Australia had been built with the blood and sweat of Irish people forcibly brought by the British. They may have been European but had nothing to do with continental quarrels and the political machinations of the very British who had oppressed them. What New Zealander, indeed, could have said in July 1914 whether Sarajevo was a Balkan first name or a brand of Russian caviar? And Mulhouse? And Strasbourg? What Boer from Pretoria, what Australian Irishman could have explained why those towns should be German rather than French, or French rather than German? Sending them to die by the tens of thousands in the stinking mud of Artois was already morally indefensible. But what of the Senegalese? Or the Blacks turned gray with cold in the chalky trenches of Champagne, and the Malagasies transported like livestock by sea for a month or longer in order to be cast, stupefied, into the barbed wire entanglements of the Chemin des Dames - what about them? What could they understand of the war? What could a German possibly mean to them? And in what way was he different from a Frenchman? Why was he ordered to kill the one rather than the other? And above all, why must he be killed for them? How many of them died? A hundred thousand? Two hundred thousand? Who bothered to count? To put those 850,000 luckless wretches

through four years of carnage was an abominable genocide, all the more odious in that the ones who recruited all this colored cannon fodder pretended to be their defenders. In the recruitment of coloreds, the British Establishment had beaten all known records, siphoning off more than a million Hindus towards their battlefields - or, more precisely, towards the satisfaction of their interests. Exactly one million one hundred thousand. Destitute men recruited in their arid land with tremendous doses of crude and varied propaganda. Men who wouldn't kill a skinny cow, nor even a fly, were blindly going out to get themselves killed by the hundreds of thousands. Anywhere there was a penny belonging to His Majesty, or a barrel of British oil, or a leak in the maritime monopoly imposed on the world by London, these poor devils in their knee-breeches, speaking eight hundred different languages and marching behind a British swager stick, would he used ruthlessly.

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The Hindus, thrown in great numbers onto unknown battlefields, and the colored subjects of the French colonies, had rapidly been followed by other masses of humanity. Noncombatant workers were brought to the factories of France and the United Kingdom to turn out millions of artillery shells, which the Western Allies scattered over their battlefronts in a rain of death. These workers had been rounded up in the colonies: for example, the future Ho Chi Minh was brought in from Tonkin. A great many others had been recruited in China: for example, the future Chou En-Lai. In all three, million non-Europeans, for whom the quarrels of Europe were as indecipherable as Sanskrit to an Andalusian vinegrower, were brought to swell the ranks of Europe's armies and workers.

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Senegal, Madagascar, Tonkin, India, and China had not been sufficient for Europe's needs. As early as 1915 it had been necessary to bring the Arabs as well into the ranks of the British. The Muslims had then been promised the reward of the Crescent, that is, a great independent Arab kingdom from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf, if they joined up with the Allies, and especially with the British troops. The Arabs could be either very dangerous or eminently useful. Turkey, on the side of the Germans since 1914, was the keystone of Islam. The caliph of Istanbul was its spiritual leader. The Turkish empire stretched from Thrace and the Bosphorus to the approaches of Egypt. Tens of millions of Arabs were united with Constantinople in the same active and passionate faith. Even beyond the Near East, the spiritual influence of Turkey extended to the most distant colonies of the British Empire, especially to the Indies, where there were more than a hundred million devout Muslims. If the British diplomacy proved to be clumsy, the rulers of the Empire could anticipate dangerous agitation, insurrections, and revolts fomented in the very heart of their empire. An "Islamic holy war" would do them more harm than a hundred thousand German combatants on the western front. To gain an alliance with those hundreds of millions of Muslims (two hundred and fifty million then, eight hundred million today) and most especially with those who lived in the bosom of the

Turkish empire, was therefore of the utmost military and economic interest to the British. The extraction of petroleum - the blood of the modern world - was undergoing an ever greater development in those countries, where it constituted a sort of private preserve of British interests.

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As early as 1915 some particularly clear-headed British agents attempted to bring off an agreement with the Arabs. The Arab chiefs who exercised politico-religious power in the torrid lands of Arabia, Syria, and Mesopotamia were nomads first and foremost, without much political importance. They prayed to Mecca and traveled from oasis to oasis on their camels. They lived frugally, eating in those days less caviar and paté de foie gras than dates. In 1915 they were poor and doubtless happier in their deserts than they would subsequently be in their caramel-colored palaces in Monte Carlo, Geneva, California, and Marbella, or in their gold-plated Mercedes at two million dollars apiece. The game of tempting those hardy warriors who lived only for their faith, was made easier by the fact that the British had a man on the scene throughout the war, a clever political representative, T.E. Lawrence, who was discreet, realistic and possessed imagination: he was like a skinny Churchill without the cigar and the cognac. He had been a pupil in France of the Jesuits, the best teachers in the world. Dry as a camel's tail, Lawrence had lived for years among the tribes of the Near East, worming his way into the hearts of the Bedouins, sharing their lives, their dates, their tents, and even homosexual relations with some of them. To hear him tell it and to see him dig up piles of stones, he was an archeologist. In reality he was a British spy. He had learned all the Arab dialects and lived as frugally as a camel- driver. He would become the great man of Anglo-Arab fraternization: he probably believed in that in all honesty, because in his own way he was a paladin. He would later renounce all honors and official duties when he saw that Britain had hoodwinked his proteges. Returning to England in disgust, he would die there in a highly suspicious motorcycle accident.

In 1916 the plan was definite: Lawrence was going to tip Turkish Arabia into the British camp. Throughout 1915 there had been great danger. The only possibility that presented itself to the British at that time was the Arab region of Hejaz, bordering the Red Sea, an area that was infertile and sparsely populated. Its coast was inhospitable, dominated by the winds of the desert and the burning sun. But in the matter of religion, it was of decisive importance. Its capital was Mecca, the millennial town of the prophet, the religious center of the Muslims. The second town of Hejaz, almost equally famous, was Medina. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims came to Mecca each year. It offered an exceptional opportunity for a propaganda coup. The emir who ruled the Bedouins of Hejaz, if he took a stand against Constantinople, would be able to transform the conditions of the Anglo-Turkish conflict completely. He was named Hussein. He wasn't very rich, and a few felicitous subsidies facilitated the initial British contacts. The money wasn't everything, however. The Arabs were by nature quick to take offense; independence was their life. They had always lived free in their deserts, cleaving to the sand and the wind. They had once possessed one

of the greatest empires in the world, from the Ganges to Narbonne. Cordova had sheltered one of their most marvelous mosques; Sicily, their most elegant court. The memory of that great past hovered in the mind of every Arab like the perfume of a secret and everlasting vine of jasmine. The Colonial Office did its best to court the Emir Hussein. On June 15, the British promised him in writing the reconstitution of a great unified Arab state as soon as the Turks had been vanquished with the collaboration of the Muslims. At the time, the British were generous in fixing the boundaries of the future state. It was no small country: from Mecca to Damascus, from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf. Under those conditions, the military alliance was worth a try. Sir Henry MacMahon, British high commissioner of the Indies, and Emir Hussein established the nature of that "great Arab kingdom," in an exchange of ten letters. From November 4, 1916 on, Hussein would be considered king of the new free Arabia. The British pledge was categorical, though secret, as was everything the British government signed.

It was almost too beautiful. The Adriatic had already been promised to the Italians by the Treaty of London, which was also secret, whereas in fact that territory had been considered a fief of the Serbo-Russians since the beginning of the war. With an equally imperturbable commercial sense, the British had offered Macedonia to the Bulgarians in 1915, whereas by verbal commitment it belonged to their Serbian ally. In the same fashion, the territories granted and guaranteed to the Arabs in 1916 would be granted and guaranteed by these same Britishers in part to the French and in part to the Italians. Even the Jews would be guaranteed part of the spoils, Palestine, which had already been allotted to the Russians. Moreover, these generous distributors, with the same jealous secrecy, and behind the backs of the Arabs, who were theoretically satisfied, had allocated to themselves the most savory morsels of this same Near East, notably those where petroleum flowed even more bountifully than the milk and honey of the Bible. A sextuple distribution! Each one was carried out on the quiet, with the Greeks ignorant of what had been promised the Italians, the Italians unaware of what had been awarded to the Russians; nor did the Russians know what had been assigned to the French, nor the Arabs what had been promised to the Jews. The British had concluded each agreement without the knowledge of any of the other confederates. That made seven separate competitors and beneficiaries who would collapse screaming when they discovered at the Versailles table in 1919 that there were no less than seven dinner guests invited to eat the same dish at the same time.

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Moreover, the British Establishment had no sooner promised Hussein, the newly-minted monarch, sovereignty over an Arab kingdom three million square kilometers in area (six times the size of France) than on March 9, 1916 they personally secured magnificent possessions for themselves in the same territories. The signatories of that pact, once again a secret one, were the Frenchman, Georges Picot, and the Briton, Sir Mark Sykes, whence the name of the Sykes-Picot treaty. The British, then, magnanimously allotted themselves the petroleum of

the Tigris and Euphrates area. The French were awarded the administration of the coasts of Lebanon and a preponderant influence in Syria, so "preponderant" that it would be established on the day of reckoning in 1919 with cannon fire. Those agreements annihilated the commitment solemnly accorded to Hussein of a "great Arab kingdom," which was thereby deprived of its most important territories. The British would end up by bringing an unexpected wolf into the secret sheepfold: the "Balfour Declaration" of 1917, which the Allies judged indispensable if they wished to obtain the support of Jewish finance and the Jewish press in the United States and force Woodrow Wilson's hand. It would grant the Zionists a "homeland" at the expense of the Arabs and assure to each Jewish immigrant a keg of powder that would work wonders at the proper time.

"This triple play of the Foreign Office," wrote the Belgian historian de Launay, "the starting-point of the contradictions in British policy in the Levant, was to be fraught with consequences." It would be half a century before the Arabs would succeed more or less in unraveling this sextuple web of closely woven threads in which the British, between 1915 and 1918, had imprisoned them from head to foot. Despite the fact that the Arabs made up more than ninety percent of the population of Palestine in 1918, they would never succeed in throwing off the Israeli web woven by Balfour. For the moment, and that was all that interested the British in 1916, the entire Arab world, mounted on their swift camels, brandishing daggers and knives, hurled themselves on the Turks, with Lawrence, who had become the intimate friend of the son of King Hussein, the Emir Feisal, at their side. The latter was a splendid prince, as impressive as a prophet when he appeared, wrapped in his white djellaba and armed with his dagger set with diamonds. He and Lawrence attracted new allies. They didn't lack for pounds sterling: British banknotes for Muslim lives. Thanks to those funds, they acquired confederates, stirred up the tribes, and assembled that desert army that British diplomacy alone would never have succeeded in raising. In addition to cunning and courage, they had physical stamina, those warriors; though eating little, they were always combat-ready, tireless, indefatigable. The Arab people, now often painted as ludicrous revelers, were then noble, loyal, trusting, and hospitable. The United Kingdom used them much and misused them even more. Without them, how far would the British imperialists have gotten in their riding breeches? In the end, poor Feisal would lose out, and would even be driven from Mecca by his Saudi rival, ibn-Saud, another magnificent warrior. But British gold, as it had done in Europe for centuries, paid all rivals indiscriminately in order to get them to kill each other advantageously. Europe was dying due to British duplicity and Arabia was on the point of dying, too. In the fight against the Turks, the Arabs furnished the British with splendid reinforcement troops from 1916 to 1918. When facing the Turks in 1916, the British, just like the French, had seen their big cruisers go to the bottom in the neck of the Sea of Marmora and their soldiers die by the thousands at Gallipoli of misery, cold, and typhus. The route from the Suez Canal to Aleppo was open in 1917 and 1918 only because some tens of thousands of Muslim warriors throughout all of Arabia heroically carried the

colors of the hope of the prophet at the end of their lances. Those colors were not exactly the Union Jack! Nor in the course of those battles did one see shining the six-pointed star that now floats autocratically over Jerusalem! The Allied war of "Right" in Arabia, as elsewhere, was the Cannon Fodder from the Colonies omnipotent war of Force. The Europeans ruined themselves morally in the eyes of foreign peoples, especially the Muslims, by stooping to these base plots, flinging showers of lying promises everywhere, cynically hoping to obtain fraudulent dividends. Sooner or later Europe would pay for this, and see the mirage of too easy swindles vanish in the burning air of those marvelous countries.

CHAPTER XXV

Chapter 25

The Slaughter Drags On

Meanwhile, on the battlefront of Western Europe, the gigantic hecatombs of 1915 had not sufficed. The Europeans were going to remedy that by massacring each other more stupidly than ever. At Verdun in 1916, besides a million wounded, 336,000 Germans were killed, as well as 362,000 Frenchmen. Each bled the other white. On February 21, 1916, on the first day alone, the artillery fired more than a million shells, burying thousands of soldiers alive. Along the front there was no longer a spadeful of earth that could still be plowed. One no longer bothered to take the weapons from men who had been buried upright. Photos were taken; one moved on somewhere else.

Somewhere else was Artois, since each commander wished to have an offensive to his credit. Falkenhayn had had his offensive at Verdun. Joffre, almost at the same time, began to prepare his own offensive on the Somme. He knew that only by burying the enemy under hundreds of thousands of shells would he be able to cross whatever remained, if anything did remain. The home front made unprecedented sacrifices. Vietnamese and Chinese machinists worked until they dropped. On the first of July 1916 the bugles sounded the coming victory. The artillery barrage surpassed anything ever seen before: a gun fired every eighteen meters. It was like a forest of steel and resulted in rows on rows of crosses in the cemeteries. Bled white at Verdun, the French were forced to reduce their profligacy in human lives. At first Joffre counted on launching an attack with 42 divisions. Then in March it became necessary to reduce the number to 34; in May, to 32. Even at that, there were a great many colonials among them. On the other hand, the British reinforced their contingents: 26 divisions. Thousands of cannon and hundreds of thousands of exhausted men stretched out across a breadth of thirty kilometers. For six days the artillery inflicted an annihilating fire on the Germans. Then French and English troops were sent to the slaughter. In those days soldiers were still loaded like mules - sixty-five pounds on their backs to engage in hand-to-hand fighting! At the third German line of defense, they collapsed from exhaustion. "The Franco-British," wrote Marc Ferro (La

Grande Guerre, p. 150), "did not get past the insignificant villages of Thiepval, Mametz, Combles, and Chaume. They were fighting two against one, but the Germans had carefully constructed underground blockhouses that made their defense in depth invulnerable. The Allied attempts of 20 July, of 3 September, and of 20 September 1916, failed like all the rest."

And the price of these useless battles? The figures were dreadful. By the second day the British Command had already lost forty thousand Englishmen. One might think that would be enough. But no. Attack after attack! Each time throwing away tens of thousands of men. "At the end of the battle," Ferro adds, "the British had lost 419,654 men; the French, 194,451; and the Germans, 650,000." The brief offensive of the Somme had taken more than one million two hundred thousand victims. Two million dead and wounded in only two battles in France in 1916! And who would benefit? Joffre was replaced by a general named Nivelle, who would only increase the losses in 1917 and be brought down in turn. All along the front the bodies of those who had died in vain lay rotting between the lines by the tens of thousands. "The infantrymen, mowed down by machine guns," one soldier related, "lie face down on the ground, drawn up as though at drill." The rain fell on them inexorably. Bullets broke their bleached bones. Rats swarmed under the faded uniforms; "enormous rats, fat on human flesh," in the words of an on-the-spot witness, who continues: "The body displayed a grimacing head devoid of flesh, the skull bare, the eyes eaten away. A set of false teeth had slid onto the rotted shirt, and a disgusting animal jumped out of the wide-open mouth."

* * *

Was a less atrocious solution at least being approached anywhere else? What was happening at the Italian front? There, too, the Allies had wished to fight it out, but Austria had cut the ground from under them. On May 15, 1916 she captured Asiago and took 30,000 prisoners. Then she marked time. After a conference at Chantilly, Allied plans fixed the dates for a triple offensive: first in France, and when success had been attained there, afterwards in Italy and in Russia.

On the Italian front the attack took place on August 28, 1916. They would make four tries at it. On the first try they captured Gorizia, a quiet provincial seat where, strangely enough, in a convent are to be found the remains of the last legitimate pretender to the throne of France, the Count of Chambord. The Italians, who had a larger force than the Austrians, carried the position valiantly. But they could go no farther. A second offensive, in September 1916 failed. Then a third one in October and a fourth in November. They were stopped at Gorizia. The cost: for the Italians 75,000 casualties, and still more for the Austrians. There, as in France, the offensives of 1916 had not even served the grave-diggers, who suffered enforced unemployment thanks to the machine-gun fire.

* * *

That left the Russians. There, a surprise! When everyone was failing, the Russians were going to succeed! On August 16, 1916, at the worst moment of Verdun, General Brusilov, tough as a Cossack hetman and a capable leader (among so many who were sluggish and of ill repute) launched an attack through Galicia. He had prepared his attack intelligently, assembling a heavy concentration of artillery that finally had sufficient ammunition. The Austrians had stripped themselves of part of their troops and heavy artillery in order to carry out their offensive of May 15 against the Italians. If a Russian offensive fell upon them on the east, they would not be able to resist. A week after Austria had attacked toward Asiago, Brusilov charged into the Austrian lines. He was going to reconquer all of Bukovina and part of Galicia. The results were extrordinary: more than 400,000 prisoners! A hard blow for the Austrians. A thousand of their cannon had also been captured. They had lost 25,000 square kilometers of territory (compared with the insignificant eighty square kilometers won by the French at Peronne). That would be the Russians' biggest victory, and their last as well. Brusilov's right wing, facing Prussia, had not been able to take the offensive. There it had run up against the Germans. The Russians on the right were brought to a halt, then cut to pieces. Brusilov, fortunate as he had been, had his horse shot from under him. Once again, the offensive had accomplished naught, despite its initial success. The Russian army was weary, practically falling apart; revolution was already rumbling, as the ground rumbles and smokes before a volcano erupts. The soldiers deserted in droves. At Kovel the Germans annihilated the Russian army. Russia's great opportunity was gone.

* * *

It was then, however, that the last Balkan country not yet involved entered the war. In May 1916, when Brusilov was badly mauling Austria, Romania thought her hour had come. Its government had waited for two years, not making a bid until it was sure of winning. Now the politicians thought they could move. But a month was lost putting the finishing touches on the declaration of war. It was already too late. Brusilov was no longer winning. he first retreated, then was swept away. To join up with him was to board not a victorious cruiser but a sinking tub. Clemenceau's famous words are well known: "Among all the swine in this war, the Romanians have been the worst." They had extorted from all competitors both the possible and the impossible, concessions of territory, loans, and bribes. As in the case of the Italians, the French and British had promised ten times as much as the Germans. But the business with the Reich had been for along time a flourishing one. The Romanians had found it in their interest to play for time. Brusilov, swooping down like a hurricane, was definitely precipitating the downfall of the Austrians, they thought. It was all over, and it was imperative that they not wait an instant longer. "The lion you think dead might just make a second Serbia out of Romania with a single swipe of its paw," the Austro-Hungarian minister of foreign affairs retorted at the final moment to his Romanian colleague. The latter didn't believe him. On August 27, 1916 Romania declared war. In three months she was to be totally

annihilated. On November 27, 1916 the victorious German army, let by Marshal von Mackensen, entered the empty streets of Bucharest to the shrill sound of fifes.

CHAPTER XXVI

Chapter 26

Rout in the East

Romania nevertheless, had been a considerable morsel: 15 divisions, 560,000 men; five times the numbers of the British infantry on August 4, 1914. Geographically and strategically, her position was essential. Romania had been able to prevent the Russians, after August 1, 1914, from swarming into the Balkans. Had she been united with St. Petersburg from the onset of the war, she would have assured Russia's linkup with the Serbs and made it possible either to bring the Bulgarians over to the side of the Allies or to annihilate them, thus opening to Russia the road to Constantinople. That was why the Russians had done everything in their power to break up the defensive military pact which bound Bucharest to Vienna. Russian activities to corrupt the Romanians had been considerable. "Deciphered communications revealed to me many times what was going on," Poincaré confessed. He had received M. Take Ionescu, the most notorious of the Romanians bought by the tsar, in his private residence in the Rue du Commandant Marchand. The Romanian doorway to the Balkans was worth its weight in solid gold. The Russians had declared. themselves ready to grant them everything: Transylvania, Banat, half of Bukovina. This generous promise of spoils seemed rather dubiously optimistic to Poincaré. He wrote (L'invasion, p. 33): "These sales on credit of eastern populations and the pelts of live bears are a bit hazardous and childish." But the words are certainly apt: sale on credit of populations; populations were "sold on credit" to attract allies. M. Poincaré himself agreed to those sales unqualifiedly. They involved several million people; Transylvania alone had 3,700,000 inhabitants. Since the Romanians had dawdled so, the Germans, with their habitual sense of organization, had been able to prepare for the counterthrust. They'd had the time to bring back some excellent divisions from the Russian front, which had been in a state of suspended animation for a month, and these, together with the Austro-Hungarian divisions, had been massed in Hungary in two great armies. The greedy Romanian politicians, thinking only of easy annexations, had stupidly massed almost all their troops at the same point, at the foot of the Carpathians in Transylvania. Even at one against two, as was the usual

situation throughout 1916, the disciplined, elite German soldiers always won. It would be the same in the Carpathians. In eighteen days, from September 25 to October 13, 1916, 400,000 Romanians were swept aside, engulfed as if a tidal wave had overflowed them. The link-up of the German armies would be just a matter of tactics. On December 6, 1916, at Orsova on the Danube, they captured the last Romanian troops still offering resistance. The rest were no more than a horde fleeing towards the east. One more ally smashed to smithereens. The bad faith, the "sale of peoples," the annexations, which were wrong by any standard, had only served to aggravate the western reverses of the Entente, now painfully parapeted behind their hundreds of thousands of dead at Artois, Champagne, and Verdun. For the Russians the Romanian debacle was going to be the straw that broke their back once and for all.

The last hope of the tsar had crumbled. "The government," a delegate to the Russian congress of the union of towns declared, "has fallen into the hands of buffoons, sharpers, and traitors." In the Duma, on December 26, 1916, the socialists called openly for revolution: "If you continue to fight this government by legal means, you are like Don Quixote, who tilted at windmills." That same evening, Rasputin, the great favorite of the tsaritza, the corrupt and omnipotent colossus, was poisoned, bludgeoned, machine- gunned, and thrown headfirst into the Neva through a hole chopped in the ice. The beaten troops were no longer willing to fight. The trains of pious priests had been derailed. The famished people readied their hammers and sickles. The last prime minister, Prince Galitsin, was an impotent old man. The minister of the interior, Protopopov, was a dotard who suffered from complete paralysis. "At any moment" the British ambassador wrote, "Russia may burst into flames." Another three months and the tsar would take the final plunge.

The tsarist regime had finally become aware that it was sinking in quicksand. Its head and arms were still afloat, but the sea of blood and mire would soon swallow them up. Germany, on learning of the coming collapse, had tried discreetly to offer the tsar a helping hand. The Kaiser was his first cousin. Wilhelm II had never wished to make war against him. Besides, he more than ever needed all his forces on the western front in 1916. Negotiations got quietly under way. When the coded telegrams from the Romanian legation, which were deciphered in Paris, suggested the danger of a Russian withdrawal, the French and the British politicians were terrified. Clemenceau roared, "Then we are goners!" It was imperative to quell immediately any possibility of a German offer and to offer more themselves, to promise so many benefits that the beneficiary, overwhelmed by the wealth of the gifts, could not refuse. The system had worked well with the Italians, the Romanians, and the Arabs. The draft of a Franco-Russian treaty was drawn up by the secretary- general of French foreign affairs, Berthelot, the eminent Paris collaborator with the Balkan countries, who was said to have personally composed the text of the Serbian refusal of a joint committee to study the crime of Sarajevo. In 1916, in a new offer, Berthelot awarded the Russians the Austrian crown territory of Galicia, Hungarian Ruthenia, that part of Poland ruled by the Germans, and Constantinople and the Straits. Armenia

as well, which had already been promised to the Armenians. Plus a large part of Asia Minor, including the Holy Land, which had been granted earlier to the Emir Hussein. With that document the French government cancelled its promises of independence, previously given with great fanfare to the Czechs, the Ruthenians, and the Poles. As the Pan-Slays had anticipated even before 1914, they would be reduced to the role of subjects in three Russian viceroyalties entrusted to three grand dukes.

When Ambassador Paléologue received the text in St. Petersburg, with orders to transmit it immediately to the government of the tsar, he exploded with indignation and sent Paris the following telegram, which is almost humorous in view of the fact that this French diplomat had unquestionably urged a war of conquest with Alsace-Lorraine as the prize: "Our country is not waging a war of conquest, but a war of liberation, a war of justice." And Paléologue added: "Our British and Italian allies will never go along with us, will never consent to such an increase in territory, an increase that will extend Russian power clear to the Mediterranean, clear to the Suez Canal." It was then necessary to send a French mission to Russia posthaste, so fearful was Paris that St. Petersburg would make peace with Germany behind its back.

Like Paléologue, the French minister, Ribot, refused to preside over the mission. Finally, the presidency of the mission was entrusted to the colonial minister, a pudgy little man from the south of France, not very polished, named Gaston Doumergue. In return for the enormous territories the Pan-Slays were receiving, he was supposed to persuade the tsar and Sazonov at St. Petersburg to sign the following text, containing the official commitments Russia was making to France: Alsace-Lorraine will be returned to France unconditionally, not with the reduced boundaries set by the Treaty of Vienna, but with the boundaries it had prior to 1790. Its borders will extend as far as those of the ancient duchy of Lorraine and will be drawn in accordance with the wishes of the French government in such a way as to reincorporate in French territory all the iron and steel works of the region as well as the coal fields of the Saar valley. All other territory situated on the left bank of the Rhine that is now part of Germany will be completely detached from the latter country. Any such territory not incorporated into the territory of France will be formed into a neutral buffer state. Nicholas II warmly encouraged Doumergue: "Take Mainz, take Koblenz, go as far as you like" (Marc Ferro, La Grande Guerre, p. 241). When the mission was over, little Gaston, grinning from ear to ear, triumphantly stated to the press (Petit Parisien, Figaro, Le Temps): "We have a closer and more cordial understanding than ever! Russian collaboration has not failed and will never fail." This on March 6, 1917! A week later to the day, on the stroke of midnight, the tsarist regime would go up in smoke. Little Gaston had shown a shrewdness and farsightedness that was nothing short of stunning. Briand, for all his astuteness, had been even less perspicacious than little Gaston. Historian Ferro writes: The Russians considered that the Straits comprised the compensation offered in return for Alsace-Lorraine. In return for the left bank of the Rhine, they wanted liberty of action on their western border: that is to say that France should

abandon the cause of Polish independence. Briand hesitated before acquiescing, but he resigned himself to it on March 10, 1917. (La Grande Guerre, p. 242) Thus Briand, too, agreed to the treaty, but "without England's having been informed." Once the French had crossed the Rubicon, the British would growl, but there was nothing they could do except acquiesce. The year 1916 had seen the battlefields of France strewn with the bodies of hundreds of thousands of British soldiers, and the waters of the Dardanelles dotted with the drowned sailors of their fleet. For Russia to abandon them would mean that the entire might of Turkey would be able to swing round on them on the Euphrates as well as in the Sinai. Like the others, the British rulers told themselves that promising wasn't the same as giving. All of them would be as slippery as eels when they were called to account for their promises at Versailles in 1919.

In March of 1917 the Russians and the French were equally blind. On March 8, 1917, in starving St. Petersburg, the mob broke into the butcher shops, grocery stores, and bakeries and cleaned them out. Protopopov, the minister of the interior, learned of the incidents without emotion, saying, "If there is going to be a revolution in Russia, it won't be for another fifty years." Reminiscent of the tsar, who, two days before the war, had written in his personal notebook, "Today we played tennis. The weather was magnificent." And on the following day: "I went for a walk by myself. It was very hot. Took a delicious bath." Happy the empty heads that don't even feel the hot breath of passing cannonballs. Minister Protopov's "fifty years" would last just four days. On March 12, 1917, the Russian government, abandoned by the troops, disappeared. The duma and the St. Petersburg Soviet on March 14 set up a provisional government. Apparently it was not yet more than halfway revolutionary. For its president and figurehead it had Prince Lvov. Princes always abound in revolutions. Sometimes they are named Philippe Egalité, are fanatics, vote for the decapitation of their relatives, and afterwards, as a well- deserved thank-you for services rendered, are themselves made a head shorter. To counterbalance the princely crown of Lvov, a Jewish socialist was appointed to the impromptu government: Aleksandr Kerensky. On May 13, 1917 the tsar's train was blocked by rioters. On the night of May 14 he abdicated, then went to bed. "I sleep long and moderately," he wrote calmly in his imperial notebook. For a moment he would still try to have his son accepted as regent of the empire. Then Grand Duke Michael. The latter would be Michael II for a few hours, then abdicate in turn. Then came the republic.

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The Allies wanted to believe in that new republic. "Perhaps it is the renewal of Russia," commented Briand. London and Paris made haste to send eager delegations. Several cabinet ministers and some socialist deputies went running to the new Mecca, notably wealthy Marcel Cachin, the future leader of the French Communists. They were overflowing with the eloquence and enthusiasm of fraternity. They even went so far as to approve imprudently the formula of the Soviets, "Peace without annexations or requisitions." The slogan

didn't correspond to the agreement signed by the tsar just before his overthrow, allotting hundreds of thousands of kilometers of territory. In that treaty, endorsed by both parties, the tsar delivered almost the whole of Germany to French ambitions. On the other hand, the Cossacks were to be able to ride clear to Jerusalem. The new Russian republicans would at most allow a referendum in Alsace-Lorraine, "under the control of an international commission." Another affirmation which was very little in line with Allied policy: "The responsibility for the war lies with all of us." What then of the horrible Kaiser solely responsible, and the gibbet already prepared for him? The illusions were stubborn, and they became ever more dizzying. The Allied delegates rushed to embrace the leaders of the revolutionary government. They parted from their new brothers with tears in their eyes. "They set out as shameless partisans," Ferro tells us, "concerned about the interests of their governments, and they returned from Russia singing the glories of the fatherland of the revolution." (La Grande Guerre, p. 332) With an eye to keeping up appearances, the Russian minister of foreign affairs had made it a point to be soothing in his messages to the Allies. His foreign program: "To combat the common enemy to the finish and without hesitation" and to respect "the international obligations incurred by the fallen regime in a steadfast manner." Prince Lvov having been liquidated without delay, Kerensky became minister of war. He left to harangue the troops at the front. The peasant soldiers thought only of deserting the army and getting back to their villages in time to obtain their share of the distribution of land, the only point in the revolutionary program that interested them. The military command fell apart; some generals were assassinated; others vanished. With a glorious lack of comprehension, Nivelle, the French commanding general, nonetheless demanded that the disintegrating Russian army go back on the offensive. In Paris, the future Marshal Pétain, always calm and clearheaded, retorted with extreme skepticism, "The Russian army is nothing but a façade. We must be prepared for it to collapse as soon as it makes a move." Miraculously, it did move. The Russian offensive demanded by Nivelle got under way on July 1, 1917, on a forty-kilometer front: 23 divisions commanded by Brusilov, the perennial prime mover. The first day yielded astonishing results; his troops defeated the first line of Austro-German forces. But there wasn't a second day. Brusilov had taken 10,000 prisoners; they would be the last. Old Pétain was right. Some Russian divisions refused to attack. There was "no way to compel the troops to fight," Brusilov acknowledged.

The enemy counterattacked; this time it was the Germans, the soldiers par excellence, driving the Russians in a frantic flight through Galicia, which was completely lost in ten days, with 160,000 killed, wounded, and taken prisoner. A month later, General von Huffier would have only to give the Duma a little shove to take possession of Riga. It was a rout. In France, too, it would soon be close to a rout.

CHAPTER XXVII

Chapter 27

Trembling Resolve

The Allied attacks which, it was anticipated, would bring the Germans to their knees in 1917, were to be three-fold. First, the attack of the Russians. Once the tsar had fallen, Brusilov had valiantly delivered his knockout blow. But the attack had shattered against the enemy. The Italian attack hadn't come to much in the course of the spring. Prime Minister Rosselli (who in the world still remembers that name?) was a decrepit old man, a spark barely alive. In the parliament, the socialists were rebellious. "It's not tolerable for the Italian people to have to face another winter of war," they declared, already feeling cold months before Christmas. As in the preceding year, it was the Anglo-French front which would have to deliver and, if necessary, receive the big blow. The new commander-in-chief, Nivelle, didn't intend to be satisfied with "pecking away at the front." He wanted a breakthrough battle. Lyautey, Pétain, and even Painlevé, the minister of war, put scarcely any credence in an attack. Nivelle played the prima donna: "We shall break through the German front whenever we wish to." The tactics he envisioned were to attack a weak point by surprise. In one day, he asserted, or at most two days, the German front would be broken, and "with the breach thus opened, the terrain will be clear for us to go where we will, to the coast of the North Sea or to the Belgian capital, to the Meuse or to the Rhine."

Nivelle was opposed by Marshal von Hindenburg, the powerful and unshakeable German military commander. He was seconded by General Ludendorff, the true military genius of the First World War. They were not about to give the French either a weak point or a chance of surprise. They knew that strategy must not stifle tactics. They had suspected the plan of their adversaries, which in any case had been announced with great fanfare by the newspapers.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff, silently and with the greatest of care, had prepared huge, impregnable concrete positions twenty kilometers back. Just before the French offensive, they fell back to these lines with great stealth, The terrain in front of the Germans was now desolate, virtually impassable, and flooded over

a wide area. The best officers of the French general staff were worried. The offensive was being lured into a trap. Nivelle, however, was cockier than ever: "If I'd been giving Hindenburg his orders, I'd want him to pull back just as he's done." Now that the Germans had made things so easy for him, he launched the attack on April 9, 1917. The Anglo-Canadians went over the top first, then the French. The attack extended from the Oise to La Montagne de Reims. The most famous battle position would be Chemin des Dames. Years later I passed through that ghastly landscape. Human skulls still lay around all over. Tourists used to carry them away in the luggage-racks of their bicycles. 40,000 men were killed in the first few dozen hours.

Nivelle thought he could carry the day by hurling tanks into the battle, makeshift tanks in which the gasoline storage was placed forward. In one afternoon, 60 of the 120 tanks burst into flames. The crews were burned alive. After three days, the Allies had to break off the battle without having overrun even a single one of Hindenburg's bunkers. The returning soldiers were in terrible condition. An officer who witnessed their return from the front wrote, "I have never seen anything more poignant than the two regiments streaming along that road in front of me all day long. "First there were skeletons of companies, sometimes led by a surviving officer supporting himself with a cane. All of them were marching, or rather advancing with short steps, knees giving way, and zig-zagging as though intoxicated. Then came some groups that were perhaps squads, perhaps sections, you couldn't tell. They went along, heads down, despondent, weighed down by their gear, carrying their blood- and dirt- soiled rifles by the slings. The color of their faces scarcely differed from the color of their uniforms. Mud had covered everything, dried completely, and then been soiled afresh with more mud. Their clothing as well as their skin was encrusted with it. Several cars came driving up with a roar, scattering this pitiable flood of survivors of the great hecatomb. But they said nothing. They had lost even the strength to complain. An unfathomable sorrow welled in the eyes of these veritable war-slaves when they came in sight of the village rooftops. In that movement their features appeared taut with suffering and congealed with dust. Those silent faces seemed to proclaim something awful: the unthinkable horror of their martyrdom. "Some territorials who were watching beside me remained pensive. Two of those territorials silently cried like women." Thus ended, in April 1917, General Nivelle's race to Ostend and the Rhine.

The British Marshal Haig had thought he would do better than his French colleague. He launched his attack between Cambrai and a Flemish village with a complicated name: Passchendaele. He was assisted by Belgian troops and by a French contingent. Marshal Haig, too, thought to carry the day with a massive assault by his tanks. They penetrated the first German line of defense just in time to be turned into an enormous inferno. There, too, half the tanks were hit squarely in the fuel storage section and destroyed amid the screams of crews being roasted alive in their flaming coffins. Afterwards it was the usual butchery. Passchendaele was one of the biggest slaughterhouses of the war. The number of English, Scottish and Irish who were killed or wounded there is

well-nigh incredible: 400,000, "for nothing," the historian Ferro adds. None of which would keep Joffre, the French general, from writing with reference to his British friends, "I should never dare leave them to guard the lines; alone, they would be routed." Or Pétain from adding, in 1917, the year of Passchendaele: "The British command is incompetent." As may be seen, among the Allies brotherhood reigned.

The news from Italy did not gladden the Allies. In the Lizenzo valley, amid rock walls a thousand meters high, the Germans and Austrians during those months were in top form. They had finished off the Russians. They occupied all of Serbia and Romania as well. For the first time, Hindenburg and Ludendorff had agreed to second the efforts of the Austrians, by giving them 37 German divisions. Certain moves of the new Austro-Hungarian emperor, Charles I, disturbed them, and by reinforcing him they hoped to restore his enthusiasm. Seven German divisions would serve as the battering ram of the attack. Two traitors had communicated the Austro-German offensive plans to the Italian General Carmona several days in advance. Despite the fact that he had 41 divisions at his disposal, General Carmona was worried about "symptoms of a growing spirit of revolution among the troops." It was already October 14, and snow was falling. In three days the principal peaks had fallen to the Germans. From then on the valley was open. The disaster of Caporetto was under way. Some Italian units heroically sacrificed themselves, but others surrendered in entire divisions. Countless deserters turned tail and fled. The Tagliamento was crossed. The Italian army couldn't pull itself together until it reached the Piave. The results were added up: not too many had been killed, about 10,000. But the number of Italian prisoners taken was immense: 293,000. Moreover, 3,000 cannon-half of the entire Italian artillery forces-had been lost, and more than 300,000 rifles, 73,000 horses and mules, and the principal food and supply depots. Caporetto meant the complete loss of morale in Italy.

The phenomenon was not limited to the Italians. Armies everywhere were grumbling. The soldiers had suffered too much. They had seen too many massacres. In Russia they had set off an explosion, but it was plain that in France, too, there was danger that mutinies would break out and the front give way. In August 1914 the deluded people had embarked enthusiastically on "a short war" that would be not so much hard work as a romp. At worst, the French and the Russians would meet on the banks of the Spree at Berlin within three months! As may be seen in photos of the period, in Berlin, Vienna, London, and Paris a popular delirium held sway. At Munich a young fellow named Adolf Hitler fell on his knees to thank the heavens for that stroke of good luck. The thousands of trains and the first columns of trucks bore destination points chalked on them in big letters: Berlin for the French; Paris for the Germans. It was going to be a fine trip. But it had finally gone off the tracks. The common people knew nothing at all, neither how horrible war is (and it had reached new heights in the West during the past half century), nor how Freemasonry had directed their members in high office to use all possible subterfuges, lies and diplomatic forgeries to pursue interests alien and detrimental to them, the

majority of common people. The Sazonovs, the Balfours, the Poincarés, with cynicism and hypocrisy, were leading the people to genocide. There had been the great massacres of 1914, then those of 1915, then those of 1916. Now it had started all over again, for the fourth time, in 1917. More than half the conscripts of 1914 were dead. Whatever their country, men wanted no more of it.

There was great misery on the home front as well. The women were exhausted by the difficult job of cultivating the fields in the absence of the men, substituting their feeble strength for the hundreds of thousands of requisitioned horses; and with turning out the millions of artillery shells in the war factories alongside alien laborers from the colonies. People were cold and hungry. In the beginning the masses had been in complete agreement, because in those days the patriotism of the people was a thousand times more active than it is at present. The working man was a nationalist. The average middle-class person got a lump in his throat when a military band passed by. The socialist deputies, too, had voted for war, the French as well as the German. The ballyhoo in the press had roused the people. Anyone who had protested against the war in 1914 would have been lynched. That was no longer the case in 1917. The slaughters of 1917 brought the soldiers to the end of their morale. Many French units rebelled. In each of sixty French battalions or regiments several hundred men on separate occasions flatly refused to return to combat. At Soissons, two regiments which had mutinied attempted to march on Paris. The Internationale was sung and red flags were waved. It was St. Petersburg in miniature. It wasn't a general revolt, but there were more than forty thousand mutineers nonetheless, who for several days made it almost impossible to maintain order. The military leaders had to resort to reprisals. There were thousands of arrests: 3,427 men were sentenced, 544 of them condemned to death. Most horrible of all, soldiers had to shoot their comrades. There were 116 executions. Without thousands of imprisonments, the war in the west would have been irretrievably lost by the Allies, just as in Russia, and France would have been engulfed in revolution.

It was the same everywhere. By hurling their countries into a war of conquest, or of reconquest, in 1914 (Alsace-Lorraine on the one side, the Balkans and Constantinople on the other), the warmongers had destroyed the foundations of Europe. Her economic basis was shattered. Her peoples were decimated. International order had been struck a direct blow. Only the firm grip of certain statesmen, who had no use for democratic whims, here and there stemmed the catastrophe. Thus Clemenceau, who came to power on November 14, 1917, hatchet in hand, quelled dissent ruthlessly. "I'll burn everything, even the furniture," the fearless old man of seventy-six years declared. "Neither treason nor half-treason, just war! Nothing but war!" The so-called "war for freedom" could not be won except by muzzling freedom. The Radical Clemenceau, forcing the panic-stricken parliament to turn to him, became the absolute master of France in 1917. He immediately crushed all antiwar opposition, imprisoned his defeatist adversaries, shot those who were traitors or who looked like traitors to him. Even Poincaré, the Masonic provocateur of 1914, who had had no

choice but to go along with Clemenceau's nomination, had been shut up in the gilded cage of the presidential palace, after having had a muzzle clapped over his mouth.

In the beginning the Socialist party (a third of the German deputies) had acted patriotically. Then its extremists had organized strikes in the war factories, turning thousands of workers away from their jobs. The strikes had seriously impeded production. As for the army, the most disciplined army in the world, it remained and would remain brave and orderly right up to the last day of the war. But the German political arm would not have its Clemenceau. Wilhelm II kept far away from his troops. He was neither a strategist nor a tactician. He was enthusiastic when his troops were moving ahead, dismayed at every defeat. "Pray for us," he telegraphed at the moment of the Marne to his worthy empress, who was busy with her knitting. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg totally lacked the psychology of a fighting man. He had been replaced by a completely unknown functionary. Michaelis, who had formerly been in charge of the replenishment of stores in Prussia. A third chancellor had succeeded him, a man named Hertling, a Bavarian member of the "Society of Resolute Christians," and an aged bibliophile. Power, to him, instead of being a marvelous instrument of direct, complete, and decisive action, was a "bitter chalice." He didn't drink it for very long. Arteriosclerosis deprived him of his cup. He went from one fainting fit to another. At last he received extreme unction "in a cloud of incense."

Things were worse still in Austria-Hungary, where four successive chancellors, Berchtold, Martinitz, Seidler, and Esterhazy, succeeded each other in the space of a year. Germany's great misfortune was this: if the French had had a Hertling (a resolute Christian floating in incense), as council president; or if they had simply kept their Vivianis, Ribots, and Painlevés (hesitant, shaky, tired old democratic nags), or if, on the contrary, the Germans had possessed a political leader like Clemenceau, cleaver in hand, the fate of the world would have been different. Clemenceau had been called the father of victory, and he deserved it.

Without him, despite the immense sacrifices of the French soldiers, there would have been no victory for France. She would have gone down, if at the height of military disaster, she'd had no one to lead her but a bearded little hypocrite like Poincaré, Europe's most efficient gravedigger. Since 1914, France had been beaten every year. "One more hemorrhage like Verdun, and France will fall in a faint," the newspaper L'Heure had seen fit to write. Out of the 3,600,000 men of 1914, there remained only 964,000 surviving combatants at the end of 1917; 2,636,000 were dead, wounded, prisoners, or missing. More than ten of the wealthiest departments of France had been occupied for nearly three years. War profiteers were arrogantly living the high life. Financially, France had been bled white. It had been necessary to issue sixty billion francs in bonds for the national defense. As far as loans went, some had been covered only to the amount of 47.5 percent. Small investors, their heads turned by the hired press, had laid out billions in the Russian loans before 1914, and now found themselves ruined. As for agriculture, it had declined thirty to fifty percent (fifty-two percent of

the French soldiers were peasants). Prices had already gone up 400 percent and would reach 600 percent by the end of the war. The bread was vile, but censorship prohibited anyone from writing that "the mixture of corn and wheat flours can cause alopecia." Syphilis was ravaging the country, but there, too, the censors were vigorously plying their scissors. The information blackout, ordered by narrow-minded and despotic military men, was unbelievable. Prefects could send reports to their ministers only after they had been submitted for censorship. The ignorance in which the civilian members of the government were left was such that the president of the council once learned only from his florist that the army general headquarters was moving from Chantilly. It was imperative that the public be completely ignorant of anything that might awaken its suspicions, such as, for example, the news that serious mutinies had taken place or that two million Hindus and blacks were being used on the battlefields. Or that anti-colonial troubles had taken place in Senegal, Dahomey, and Annam, following protests against the deportation of native workers and soldiers to Europe. Or that without the labor of women, there would be a shortage of artillery shells at the front. It was only in a small informal meeting that Joffre had seen fit to state that "if the women working in the factories were to stop for twenty minutes, France would lose the war."

On the other hand, the press abounded in marvelous pronouncements aimed at stirring the masses. General Fayolle: "Joan of Arc is looking down on us from heaven with satisfaction."

La Croix: "The history of France is the history of God." Lavedan, member of the Academy: "I believe by the power of all that is holy in this crusade for civilization. I believe in the blood of the wounds, in the water of benediction. I believe in us. I believe in God. I believe. I believe." If Lavedan still believed in that wonderful jumble, soldiers believed less and less "in the blood of the wounds," and the public had more and more doubts about the regenerative effects of "the water of benediction." Far from benediction, what France was experiencing in 1917 was hunger, hundreds of thousands of widows and orphans, and millions of soldiers ground up in the mill of trench warfare. British censorship was no less fanatical and idiotic. On its orders, the press asked that the works of Wagner, Mozart, and Richard Strauss be outlawed. Léon Daudet in Paris titled an article "Down with Wagner." Darer and Cranach narrowly escaped being taken down from the walls of the Louvre and the British Museum. Now, after three years of war, in France as well as in Germany, socialist and syndicalist leaders, who were only a handful in 1914 but were many in 1917, spoke against these prohibitions and tried, despite a thousand complications arranged by the police, to rescue public opinion from this appalling state of affairs.

Some of them were undoubtedly ringleaders ready to serve any cause, with an eye to making a row, and often hired for that purpose. For example, the Communist agitators of Berlin. In 1915, after two previous meetings in Bern, a pacifist conference had been held at Zimmerwald in Switzerland. It brought together a total of thirty-eight delegates, but an attempt at Communist infiltration had been evident. Lenin, Trotsky, Radek, and Zinoviev were there, teeth bared

like Siberian wolves. The following year, the son-in-law of Karl Marx, Longet, and his followers held a pacifist demonstration at the French socialist congress of April 16, 1916 which attracted much attention. Their motion demanding a peace with no annexations obtained a third of the ballots: 900 votes against 1800. Another conference was held at Kienthal. Its manifesto already had the tone of the October 1917 harangues at St. Petersburg: Proletarians of Europe! Millions of cadavers cover the battlefields. Millions of men will be disabled for the rest of their days. Europe has become a giant human slaughterhouse. Above and beyond the borders, above and beyond the fields of battle, above and beyond the devastated countryside, proletarians of all countries, unite!

At Kienthal, Lenin's proposal to turn the war of nations into civil war triumphed, receiving two thirds of the votes. On February 18, 1917, the committee set forth its plan of battle to the proletariat: to turn their weapons not against their brothers, the foreign soldiers, but against imperialism, the enemy at home. One astonishing note: a million copies of that antimilitarist manifesto were distributed in Germany; in France, on the other hand, only ten thousand copies could be distributed in secret. In Paris, anyone who was not for the war was a traitor, so much so that the syndicalist leaders were all given a special physical examination by a review board. None of them, however bowlegged, escaped induction. The chief of the Second Bureau, Colonel Goubet, saw to it that special treatment was reserved for them, ordering them "to certain Saharan regions where the rolling of roads coincides with the shaping of character, and from which one does not always return." The wish was expressed clearly and elegantly.

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Pacifist propaganda during the First World War was above all the work of the left and especially of the extreme left. The industrialists, the financiers, and the middle classes should have been more concerned than anyone about the senseless destruction of wealth as well as the massive elimination of the cream of the labor force, the youth. The conservatives, on the contrary, during those four years lived in a hermetically sealed world of claptrap and illusions. It was the intellectuals, from Barrès to Paul Bourget and Henri Massis, who most eloquently praised the extraordinary benefits of the war and most execrated the savagery of Kant, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and the other German barbarians. Alone in this tumult of hate, Romain Rolland published his Au-dessus de la mélée [Above the Battle] which for all its title was nothing but a long lyrical sigh in favor of peace.

The men of the left, French or foreign, were not necessarily agents of Moscow and enemies of society. Often they were simply friends of mankind. One of the latter was Camille Huysmans, secretary-general of the Second International, a Belgian with the long ringed neck of a restless boa. He was intelligent, caustic, cynical for its shock value, and profoundly tolerant. In 1917, Kamil - he was called that in Antwerp-had urged pacifism along rational and strictly logical lines. The previous conferences in Switzerland had been too impassioned, and

above all too much controlled by Lenin and the other Bolshevik theoreticians, for whom the world was an object to be manipulated cold-bloodedly. A serious conference was needed in which the adversaries would meet again to deal in depth, without prejudice and without intemperate language, with the possibility and the conditions for a peace of reconciliation. As secretary-general of a Second International stricken with paralysis, Huysmans dreamed of restoring to the International the use of its limbs. It was in that spirit that in 1917 he convoked what has been called the Stockholm Conference. There the direct representatives of the enemy peoples were to get to know each other, exchange views, and weigh the chances of a "peace without annexations or indemnities." Was such a peace possible? Would it be possible to end a war in which all had been partly responsible, in which neither side, despite several million dead, had achieved decisive results, or seemed in a position to do so? The matter was worth discussing. It was not discussed, however, and for a good reason: those principally concerned, the French delegates, had been forbidden to attend the conference, the Paris government having refused to grant them the passports that would have enabled them to make the trip. The French government did not want anyone talking peace in any way, shape, or form. To talk of peace would be to make concessions, to admit to a few faults, to renounce certain claims. One could imagine that in similar negotiations the enemy, especially the Germans, who had been the big winner up to that point-would not grant everything, acknowledge everything, deliver everything. But was it really unreasonable to be reasonable? In 1917, there were already seventeen million men dead, wounded, or taken prisoner. Trying to save the lives, blood, and freedom of millions more who would be lost if the war continued, was that really so criminal? Wasn't all that blood worth a few sacrifices, a few blows to one's ego? Many delegates came to Stockholm but the most important, the French, were not there, kept at home by their police, who would thenceforth consider them dangerous suspects.

Even a man like Camille Huysmans, who was not French, became the object of a relentless persecution by the French police after the Stockholm Conference. They whipped up campaigns to discredit him everywhere. He was "the man of Stockholm," paid of course by the Germans. The newspapers repeated it over and over without letup. He was so defamed that after the Allied victory in 1918 his own followers, who were ashamed of their leader, barred him in Brussels from access to the Maison du Peuple. For ten years he suffered a persecution that was comparable to the ordeal, in France, of M. Caillaux. Even before 1914 Caillaux had understood that the French and the Germans were interdependent, and that it was necessary to effect a reconciliation with the Germans instead of fighting them. For his effrontery, he was repudiated for several years. Camille Huysmans had to expiate his bid for peace for a longer period: ten years. It was then that King Albert I, the Roi Chevalier of the Allies, summoned Huysmans to his palace at Brussels. Up to that time the Belgian monarch had refrained from speaking. The passions and the hatreds were such that to say anything slightly favorable to "the man of Stockholm" would have been to commit suicide. In 1917, before going to the Stockholm Conference, the so-called agent of the kaiser had visited

King Albert in person on the Flanders front, where he commanded the Belgian troops facing the Germans. Huysmans wanted to be sure that the congress he was organizing at Stockholm did not constitute either a challenge or an obstacle to the military and political plans of the man who occupied the very first place, morally, on the Allied side. The others, Poincaré, Grey, Sonnino, Bratianu, had been double or triple dealers. Albert I, on the other hand, was the victim of his country's geography, which made it a railroad turntable through which all trains claimed the right of passage. His own conduct had been noble and proper. He listened carefully to Camille Huysmans. His straightforward answer was, word for word, as follows: "You are right. It is necessary to negotiate. No second war, whatever my government may think of it. Carry on your efforts. I will protect you." "I could have told the truth," Huysmans wrote to de Launay, the Belgian historian, "but I held stubbornly to what the King himself said, and that's the way it was." It was handled rather solemnly. The king later cleared Camille Huysmans-who later became prime minister-in the presence of two Belgian generals "whom he had summoned and charged in my presence to tell the truth," Huymans himself related on coming out of the royal palace. But that honest man paid for his efforts-which, however ill-considered in view of the passions of the time, were humane and correct in any event-with ten years of being slandered. "To destroy my effectiveness," Huysmans stated, "the French secret service tried to represent me as a man in the pay of Germany. In Belgium that accusation was believed in the French-speaking part of the country and also in Brussels." There were also certain semi-official negotiations, involving Austria-Hungary and Germany, which might have made it possible as early as 1917 to re-establish peace. How and why did they fail?

CHAPTER XXVIII

Chapter 28

Stabs at Peace

The proposals of the new Austrian emperor, Charles I, were the most important. In 1916 the young monarch had just succeeded Franz Josef, the emperor as old as Belgium (both were born in 1830). Thus Charles I had not been involved in any way in the unleashing of the war in 1914. He had little liking for the German Kaiser, his ally by chance. His two brothers-in-law, Princess Sixtus and Xavier of Bourbon Parma, were fighting in the armies of the king of Belgium on the western front, against the Germans. Charles I was neither a reformer like Joseph II nor a tactical genius like a Metternich. He was not very aware of political realities, but he was sincere and bursting with a goodwill that on occasion made him naive. He was profoundly honest, but of course honesty in politics seldom carries one very far.

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Charles I had no capable ministers at his side, or at least any he could trust: Berchtold, the clumsy bungler of July 1914, had been replaced by a gloomy-eyed Hungarian, and then by Count Czernin. The latter, sensing that everything was tottering beneath him and that Charles I himself was headed for a fall, proved unreliable. Charles I had an intense desire for peace, a two-fold peace: domestic peace, by granting to each of the separate nationalities-Czech, Slav, Hungarian, and German-an equal area and an autonomy of very broad rights; and peace with foreign countries as well. The young emperor was not only prepared to renounce all annexations, despite the fact that Serbia and Romania were then in the hands of the Austro-German forces, but was also ready to grant his Balkan adversaries important territorial concessions. To Italy, too, which up to then had achieved little on the battlefield, he would cede the Italian-speaking part of the Tyrol. To Serbia, responsible for the assassination of the Austrian crown prince but now thoroughly whipped, its government having taken refuge at Corfu, he was willing to grant broad access to the Adriatic Sea.

Generous almost to the point of naiveté, Charles I was ready to offer still more to the Allies, who at that time were at a decided disadvantage on every front.

Taking the initiative of offering peace was fraught with risk for Charles. The Germans were watching him, and they were much stronger than he was. They had the power to crush Austria in twenty-four hours. Up to then, the Austrians had been dependent on the constant help of the Germans. Left on their own in 1914, they had been beaten in Serbia, indeed chased out of Belgrade. It had required the intervention of German and Bulgarian divisions to send Pashich packing off to Corfu in the Adriatic. In Galicia, when Brusilov had overrun them, captured 25,000 kilometers of territory, taken hundreds of thousands of prisoners, and been on the point of bursting through into Hungary, it was the German army again that had saved the Austrians from disaster. Even in Romania, it was General Mackensen who had conquered Bucharest, not an Austro-Hungarian general. The Germans thus had some rightful claims on the regime in Vienna, all the more so because without the untimely steps of Austria in 1914, Germany almost certainly would not have been dragged into the war. By running the risk of antagonizing the Kaiser, Charles I showed commendable courage. The Allies should surely have given immediate consideration to these actions on the part of Charles I, especially since he had not entrusted the negotiations to dubious underlings, but to his own brothers-in-law, who were officers in the Allied armies. The emperor sent his meddlesome mother-in-law, Maria Josepha, to Neuchâtel in Switzerland to meet her two sons, Sixtus and Xavier de Bourbon-Parma, and to charge them with the imperial peace mission. An offer to meet made to enemies does not necessarily obligate one side to reveal its hand, to commit itself in advance, and list its concessions, while the other remains silent and presents a countenance as inscrutable as the sphinx. The two Belgian officers upon whom the emperor was ready to rely had brought along preliminary demands drafted by the Allies which were very severe, indeed almost insolent in the light of the fact that the French and the British had just suffered terrible defeats in Artois, in Flanders, and in Champagne, and had left several hundred thousand men lying dead on the battlefield. The preparatory position of the Entente was brutally frank. Any conditions preliminary to a peace acceptable to the Entente must include the following indispensable demands: (1) The restitution of Alsace-Lorraine to France without compensation of any kind on the latter's part. (2) The re-establishment of Belgium (3) The restoration of Serbia with the addition of Albania. (4) The restoration of Constantinople to Russia.

These were enormous demands, which Charles I had to accept before negotiations could be admitted even in principle. The more so in that in 1916 no part of Alsace-Lorraine had yet been reconquered by the French; on the contrary, the Germans were occupying the ten wealthiest departments of France; moreover, the Serbians no longer had possession of a square centimeter of their territory; and the Russians had been unable to send a single warship to Constantinople, while the Allies had been completely thwarted when they tried to reach the city by way of the Dardanelles. The astonishing thing was that amid all these considerable claims, there was not the slightest allusion to the booty the Italians were to get, although the Allies, by the secret Treaty of London in 1915,

had nonetheless promised them the Tyrol and millions of new citizens in Europe and Asia. Nor was there any question of what the Albanians might think about being delivered to the Serbians, or the Turks about being delivered to the Russians. It was a demand that the peoples of the Adriatic and the Bosphorus merely be put on the block, and not be consulted at all. Where, then, were the famous self-determination principles which had been trumpeted so virtuously? Charles I did not allow himself to be discouraged in the face of these exaggerated demands. He sent a reply which was in large measure an acceptance to the two princes, who returned to Neuchâtel: he was in agreement with regard to Alsace-Lorraine and Belgium. With regard to the territory of the South Slays occupied by his troops, he proposed the creation of an autonomous kingdom consisting of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Austrian territory before 1914), Serbia (by then already captured), Albania, and Montenegro, "existing on its own, but within the framework of an Austrian federation which for centuries has proven its worth as a unifying body." That last proposal was not final. It could be discussed. The function of a conference is discussion. Emperor Charles I had been conciliatory in the extreme. His initial concessions were enormous, since he was a member of a military coalition in a victorious position dealing with an Allied military coalition which in 1916 had reaped nothing but humiliating and terribly bloody defeats from Flanders to Gallipoli. But he was unaware that the Allies he was appealing to were bound by a series of secret and often contradictory treaties which bound them to deliver extravagant spoils to their confederates. No honest negotiations could alter these arrangements. Prince Sixtus, after several trips back and forth to Neuchâtel, saw Poincaré in Paris. He got in touch with Briand as well. After meeting those two, Xavier and Sixtus then went to see Emperor Charles I in person. In great secrecy and at great risk, Charles went to meet his two brothers-in-law in Luxembourg-two Belgian officers in civilian clothes, in territory occupied by the Germans. The Allies still believed then (March 22-23, 1917) that they would win the battle of Artois, where instead they were about to be ground up like a round of beef. "I want peace, I want it at any price," said the young emperor of Austria-Hungary. He declared himself willing, after the initial basis of agreement had been reached with the Allies, to put as much pressure as he could on Wilhelm II to take part in the negotiations. Otherwise he would not hesitate to sign a separate peace. Charles I would go yet further. Verbal offers might be misinterpreted or even disbelieved. He seated himself at a desk and there, in the town of Luxembourg, where he risked at any moment being found out and seeing brothers-in-law arrested, wrote on March 24, 1917 a three-page letter committing his proposals to paper. In that handwritten letter, Charles I heaped civilities upon his adversaries: "The traditional bravery of the French army is admirable," he wrote. He felt "deep sympathy" for France. It was "just to give her back Alsace-Lorraine." Belgium's rights "must be fully restored." As for Serbia, he was no longer speaking of a federation but was ready to accord her not only complete independence, but "equitable and natural access to the Adriatic" as well as broad economic concessions. All that Austria asked was that Serbia, enlarged and enriched at her expense, should no longer tolerate on her soil such anti-Austrian criminal

organizations as the Black Hand, which had been so conspicuous at Sarajevo. This was an entirely understandable request. Pashich would be so impressed by the scope of these proposals that he would send emissaries to Switzerland to discuss them. To soften up the Austrians, he would even have his ex-confederate, Colonel Dimitrievich, shot. The document written by Charles I, which was of potentially decisive consequence to Europe, is now available to the world. De Launay, the famous Belgian historian, has published it in its entirety. Had it been taken into consideration in 1917, the lives of several million people might have been saved, and Central Europe would not have become the white world's great land of injustice in 1919, and the most menacing colonial territory of the USSR twenty-six years later. On March 31, 1917, Prince Sixtus saw Poincaré again. Poincaré continued to equivocate, but nevertheless thought he could no longer leave his Allies in ignorance of the facts. At that time the French president of the council-there were four different ones in 1917 up to the time Clemenceau came in and cleaned house-was Alexandre Ribot. He was an old fellow, whose nerves were shot. He peered owlishly at anyone he was talking to from behind glasses as yellow as a couple of lemons, which he was forever wiping clumsily. What he feared most was not the Germans, but that his own parliament that might lash out at him. The announcement of peace negotiations meant risking a parliamentary rebuke. What if they turned his old bones out of the presidential chair? He refused to see Prince Sixtus, despite his being an Allied officer and the bearer of peace. It was still necessary, however, to inform the Allies and warn Lloyd George. There the terms of the problem were already completely changed. For Britain, what counted was not Strasbourg, or Brussels, or the Dalmatian coast; it was the German fleet and the German colonies. Charles I had not included them in his basket of gifts. Then there were the Italians. On April 18, 1917, at St. Jean de Maurienne, Lloyd George and Ribot had confirmed and amplified the 1916 Treaty of London. They'd had to deal with Minister Sonnino. The only thing that interested Sonnino in a peace with Austria was getting Trentino, Trieste and the eastern shore of the Adriatic. That was what the French and the British has promised Italy to induce her to enter the war. Nothing less would satisfy her. The indefatigable Prince Sixtus started off on his way again to a meeting with an envoy of Charles I at Zug, in Switzerland and a second meeting at Lausanne. Finally, though an Allied officer, he proceeded secretly to Vienna on May 8, 1917 to see Emperor Charles. From the Hofburg he brought back the emperor's agreement drafted by the minister of foreign affairs, Count Czernin, "accepting the principle of an exchange of territories with Italy." So an initial proposal was offered there as well. Sonnino, with his considerable cleverness, was trying for further concessions, which as a matter of fact had already been offered in 1915, when Prince von Bülow had attempted to halt Italy's entry into the war. That was not the tragedy. Charles I had asked that in exchange for numerous concessions he be guaranteed the integrity of what would be left of Austria after losing at least Bosnia-Herzegovina, Trieste, and Trentino. The naive emperor did not suspect that powerful Masonic and anti-clerical forces within the French government did not intend Austria-Hungary, the most important Catholic country of Europe, to

be in existence after the hostilities. Secret agreements had already been made that would carve her up, dismember her provinces, and barter away millions of her inhabitants. "Once this basis of agreement is accepted," Charles I reiterated to Prince Sixtus, "Austria-Hungary will be able to sign a separate peace." Were there any obstacles? Yes, there were. The French translation made by the prince was questionable; it did not seem to correspond to the text of Vienna drafted in German. It was possible that Prince Sixtus had embellished the offer a bit, which negotiators are apt to do but such misunderstandings were usual at the start of negotiations: negotiations were made to remedy such things, to make everything clear. On the Allied side, especially on the side of the French, everything could easily and rapidly be brought into harmony. But Ribot had clamped his big yellow spectacles onto his nose. He was going to sabotage everything. Why? In a month it would be clear. Sixtus proceeded to London. He saw Lloyd George and the king, and discussed the limits of the possible peace: Germany included? Or a separate peace with Austria alone? To decide that, Lloyd George proposed a meeting between the British and the French at Compiègne. That Allied conference would never take place. France would not reply, and consequently Britain would not attend. Ribot had done his best to scuttle it even before Lloyd George set out on his journey. He had hoisted himself up on his creaky old limbs at the rostrum of the French assembly to launch this cowardly and provocative denunciation: "They will come to ask peace, not hypocritically as they do today in this shifty and circuitous manner, but openly and on terms worthy of France" (applause). "Hypocritically" and in "a shifty manner" were strong words when the Austrian emperor himself and officers of the Belgian army had offered everything and risked everything with naive sincerity. Thus the French minister publicly committed an infamous deed, not only offering a scarcely disguised insult to Charles I, but informing the emperor of Germany that his fellow monarch of Austria-Hungary had proposed peace negotiations to the Allies behind his back. A bit later Clemenceau would go still further. The unfortunate Charles I, in order to escape the wrath of William II, issued the denial that is standard in diplomatic affairs. Clemenceau, when he had become president of the council, would read to the assembly Charles' secret letter with the obvious aim of creating a fatal estrangement between his two enemies. It was a base move that wrecked any chance of future peace negotiations with Austria. Why did Ribot, "that old malefactor," as Prince Sixtus would call him, and Clemenceau after him, allow themseves to sink so low? In the first place, they were no longer in a position to discuss an equitable peace, since half a dozen secret treaties, signed by their colleagues and the British, had put up for auction some hundreds of thousands of square kilometers of Europe and tens of millions of her people. Only an overwhelming victory would make it possible for them to honor their commitments. Any other issue of the war would bring them insoluble problems, starting with the delection of their dearly bought allies. Austria was also the target of a relentless conspiracy, that of Freemasonry, for two centuries a mortal enemy of that vast Catholic country. Freemasonry wanted Austria-Hungary's hide, wanted it rended, lacerated, in pieces. Ribot was one of the most important figures in French Freemasonry.

Benes, the Czech, was the most important figure in the Freemasonry of Central Europe. He laid claim to the entire northern part of the Austro- Hungarian empire with such voracity that in 1919, with the Masonry of the entire world behind him, he would swallow up more non-Czechs than Czechs. Precisely at the very moment of these negotiations, a world congress of Freemasons met in Paris, the seat of the sinister Grand Orient, on June 28, 1917 to "create a society founded on the eternal principles of Masonry." Austria-Hungary was the exact opposite of that society. During the latter part of June, 1917 in Paris, Freemasonry passed a death sentence on Austria-Hungary proclaiming that minimum conditions of peace required the independence of Bohemia and the "liberation" of the diverse nationalities of Austria-Hungary, "goals which could not be realized without the annihilation of the Austro-Hungarian empire." Just three days before the rabidly anti-Catholic Masonic congress had been held, Ribot had been bent on bringing about the downfall of Charles I. Ribot's speech, indeed, had been the forward to it. It was the choice appetizer preceding the banquet at which the conspirators of the left would devour Catholic Austria-Hungary, prepared for them in advance with malignant gloating by old Ribot. Astonishingly, the Germans, who might well have considered themselves justified in angrily reproaching Austria-Hungary, their ally, for having secretly treated with the enemy, were extremely reserved in their protests. Why? Because they had done the same thing. Two officers of the Belgian army had been the liaison agents of Charles I. By a strange coincidence, the agents of the Reich were Brussels civilians. Both of them had been warmly encouraged, and at the same time, by King Albert I, the same who had been anxious to give his support to the socialist Camille Huysmans when he, as president of the Second International, was endeavoring to call a peace conference at Stockholm. After the war the Belgian king was everywhere held to have been the model ally. A statue was erected to him at Paris in which the warrior faithful beyond all others was advancing on horseback towards victory. In truth, King Albert distrusted the war aims of the Allies from the first day of the war to the last. He never allied himself with them completely. He wished to remain in his historic role of a neutral, knowing-history had taught him well-the cupidity of both sides, which were always ready to occupy and use his country. Even in 1914 he had refused to join up with the routed French and British armies in the south. On the contrary, he had withdrawn in the direction of Antwerp. After the autumn of 1914 he had clung to the Yser, a little Belgian stream, stubbornly refusing to leave his country. He did not believe a single perfidious word of the fine speeches of the Allies: liberty, justice, rights of man, which they used to cover up their own interests. He had no choice but to be guided solely by the interests of his country. The interest of Belgium, wedged between two powerful nations, and to whom foreign wars could bring nothing but grief, could only be Peace. Albert I had let his two officers of Bourbon-Parma travel to Switzerland, to Luxembourg, to Vienna, to London, and to Paris. He had seen them return empty-handed. However, another possibility had arisen, this one stemming from the Germans and launched in Brussels, his occupied captial.

The new negotiations involved, on the Belgian side, three principals. The first was Cardinal Mercier, the primate of Belgium. He was a tall, emaciated philosopher, a sovereign spirit, of supreme dignity and majesty. As a young student, I would be discovered by him. He was my first teacher. I still see him scrutinizing me, bright-eyed like a watching bird, majestic despite his gauntness, like a Michelangelo prophet. The second negotiator was a Frenchwomen, a Rochefoucault become Belgian through her marriage to a member of the house of Merode, in 1914 headed by a count, today by a prince. The third was a man of business, the benzine king of Belgium, Baron Evence Coppée. The German who would be the decisive element in these other secret, semiofficial negotiations was the Baron van der Lanken. As an embassy attache, he had known the young Paul de la Rochefoucault. The fortunes of war gained him a key post in the military administration of Belgium. The Countess of Merode, concerned for all who suffered the misfortunes or the rigors of the occupation, had many a time spoken to van der Lanken, much as she had done in Paris before the hostilities. In particular, she had got him to accept a petition from Cardinal Mercier requesting pardons for two men negotiations, their envoy was officially authorized to make an initial pardoned seventeen, every Belgian then awaiting execution. It was thus that the Belgian primate, wishing to thank the German diplomat, had gone to see him at the home of the Countess de Merode. Then for the first time they spoke of the possibility of re-establishing peace. The cardinal challenged the representative of the Reich to assist in negotiations between Germany and the Allies. The German took the cardinal at his word and set off for Berlin. In October 1916 he saw the cardinal again, who, after hearing him, expressed his dissatisfaction. A new trip to Berlin at the beginning of 1917 resulted in a meeting at Bad Kreuznach between the chancellor of the Reich, the secretary of state for foreign affairs, Marshal von Hindenburg, and General Ludendorff. This select assembly, at the end of April 1917, agreed to the concession of certain territories of the Reich southwest of Alsace and in French-speaking Lorraine. It wasn't yet at the point of the French army entering Metz to the sound of trumpets, but a trend was taking shape. It must not be forgotten that in the spring of 1917, the Germans had the upper hand; yet they were prepared to cede some territory. "When I made contact with the government of the Reich," Lanken later wrote, "it appeared straight off that Berlin attached the greatest importance to this endeavor. Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg and the secretary gave me encouragement at every point." A more astonishing piece of information: "It was the same with Field Marshal von Hindenburg and with General Ludendorff, otherwise so difficult to approach. As is fitting to note at once, during the entire course of this affair General Ludendorff never failed to ask for information about it and concerned himself with the success of what I was doing." That was not, to be sure, total approval, but it was the manifestation of a desire on the part of the Germans to negotiate. When during the entire course of the war was there any such attitude on the part of the Allied authorities? When did a French or British politician or military man ever make a similar gesture? The Germans might have said no for fear of having their enemies say that they had realized they were going to lose the war. Yet, even before the

negotiations, their was envoy officially authorized to make an initial concession unconditionally. A clever negotiator, once he had that thread in his hands, would no doubt pull out more of the skein. The name of that negotiator was even mentioned. Baron van der Lanken had indicated he would begin the negotiations between the Germans and the Allies with one of his Paris acquaintances from before the war, a man who was surely the most ingratiating politician in France: Briand. Between the two world wars, Aristide Briand became the best known French politician in Europe, his voice grave and softly harmonious, his mustaches hanging down like a drooping bush, poorly dressed in skimpily made business suits, and dropping ashes everywhere from his everlasting cigarettes. In June 1917, he had resigned from his position of prime minister three months too soon. Despite that he could be the perfect unofficial delegate of the Allied authorities. The Countess de Merode, having obtained a passport from van der Lanken, left for Paris where she immediately met with Briand. She delivered a proposal for an interview with Lanken in Switzerland. Briand immediately went, on June 19, to confer with Poincaré. The latter was not very enthusiastic. Nevertheless, he authorized Briand to see van der Lanken. Meanwhile, a second Belgian démarche had given impetus to the action of the princess at Paris. A second emissary had arrived in France to further support van der Lanken's proposals. He had not wanted to act, however, without first receiving the consent of the head of the Belgian government, M. de Broqueville, who, like his king, had taken refuge at Sainte Adresse, near Le Havre. He sent them the letter from van der Lanken, offering to meet with an Allied emissary. Briand, Coppée, and Broqueville planned to meet in Paris at the Ritz.

Broqueville was affirmative: "The German proposals are of a serious nature." Briand was impressed. He made up his mind and got ready. But alas, France was a democracy: the Ribot government fell. A new government was formed by Painlevé, a confused but honest mathematician, who was better at juggling logarithms and hypotenuses than diplomatic subtleties. It was necessary to start preparing the way all over again. Coppée, Briand, Poincaré, and the new prime minister weighed the possibility of negotiation. "We have to go all the way," Painlevé concluded. Poincaré was still cool to the idea, but didn't oppose it. He was a man who rarely stood in opposition to things: He cast his net, stood stock-still, waited for the other party to get caught. Ribot, who had already torpedoed the peace project with Emperor Charles I, remained in the cabinet as minister of the interior, which was not very reassuring. Briand outlined a plan of negotiations that went further than the German proposal, as was only to be expected. Instead of a part of Alsace-Lorraine, he laid claim to all of it, and he demanded war preparations as well; on the other hand, "France will not raise the question of the left bank of the Rhine nor the political and economic freedom of the German people." As in poker, both of the two parties had thoroughly studied their cards. The obstacles presented were by no means insurmountable. This sort of preliminary was usual in even the most modest negotiations. Coppée, informed before returning to Brussels, saw van der Lanken. Briand himself proposed September 22, 1917 as the date of the meeting in Switzerland. Coppée

confirmed to him in writing the confidence he now had in their success. "This turn of events had given the Countess de Merode and me an absolute conviction that Germany is ready to make the greatest possible concessions, so that the withdrawal from the occupied territory, indemnities and reparations, as well as the restitution of Alsace-Lorraine to France, may be envisaged with a virtual certainty of success." Coppée had reason to express these views. On September 11, 1917 the Kaiser himself had presided over a meeting at the imperial palace of Bellevue, decisions of which went far beyond the concessions granted at Bad Kreuznach. All the top military and civilian leaders had attended the meeting. The Germans, needless to say, were not going to give up everything before their emissary had even talked to Briand. But if van der Lanken was to be believed, they would have gone a long way. "My plan," he explained in his memoirs (p. 223), "was to get Briand, by the manner in which I listened to him, to lay out his views as plainly as possible, and to a certain extent to learn his final 'price.' Then to get to Berlin the fastest way, press for an immediate answer, and get it back to Briand in Switzerland with all possible speed." DeLaunay, the Belgian historian, who scrutinized with a magnifying glass every passage of the dossier and interviewed every possible witness, sums up the convictions of the Kaiser's unofficial emissary: "Lanken assured Coppée and the Countess de Merode that he had received orders to conclude the peace and that if the proposals he was charged to make to Briand were deemed insufficient, he would immediately ask Berlin for new instructions." (Histoire de la diplomatie secrète, p. 84). He would later add: "Given the weariness of the belligerents, a solution could have been found to the problem of Alsace-Lorraine." On September 21, 1917, the eve of the meeting with Briand, Baron van der Lanken detrained at Ouchy-Lausanne and put up at the Hotel du Chateau. The Countess de Merode and Baron Coppée were already in town, at the Beau Rivage Hotel. "Lanken," de Launay explains, "expressed his conviction that the proposed interview would be favorable to a peaceful decision. He confirmed to them that he'd had contact with the German general staff again and that the negotiations were beginning auspiciously." The meeting of the next day was to take place at the villa of a French general who was a friend of Briand. They waited in vain for Briand to arrive. On September 23, Baron van der Lanken, empty-handed, took up his valise, shocked at this evasion on the part of the French negotiator, without an excuse or even an explanation. It was Ribot, the Freemason, who had made it all miscarry. With honeyed words he had put the question to the British government: "Wouldn't it be a good idea to avoid the trap set for M. Briand?" What reply could the foreign secretary of the United Kingdom have given except that it was necessary to avoid falling into a trap? What trap? As with Vienna's proposal, the German proposal had been properly and courageously brought forward by impeccable intermediaries under the aegis of the Allied government of Belgium. "What seems to us unspeakable," DeLaunay wrote, "was Poincaré's weakness, Ribot's bad faith ... Millions of men were still to die for two Alsatian fortresses." All the attempts for peace which were still to follow, including the one entrusted to Noullens, the French ambassador at St. Petersburg, would routinely miscarry, one after another. The plans of Freemasonry were to be pursued implacably, however great the

massacre. Germany and Austria-Hungary were to be annihilated.

CHAPTER XXIX

Chapter 29

President Wilson, "Colonel" House

It is impossible to speak of the many significant peace attempts of the First World War, all of them failures, without mentioning the peace negotiations of the Americans, or more precisely of Woodrow Wilson, the president of the United States. Those negotiations, too, failed. But they were of a quite special nature; and they were going to change the face of the world. In the first place, they were the earliest of all the attempts, since they were begun as early as 1914, before the start of the war. Their sincerity quickly became suspect. They were fairly objective in 1914-from May to July in the first instance, then in the month of September after the great German victories in France and Prussia-and they even revealed a certain tendency to acknowledge that Wilhelm II, the emperor of Germany, was the only one who desired peace. From 1915 to 1917 they would slightly, then strongly favor the Allies, although that was rather hypocritically camouflaged because it was imperative not to displease the American voters, who were 90 per cent for neutrality. The secret adherence of Wilson's government to the Allies would end in the spring of 1917, with the entry of the United States into the war. The great and total evolution of the war dates from that point, when it was transformed from a European war to a world war. The paltry French-British-Russian-German quarrels would be left behind. On the one hand the tsarist power would collapse, and Communism would take its place. On the other hand, a giant America would hurl the enormous weight of its power, untried and until then almost unknown, onto the scales of world politics. Intervention by the United States would change everything. It would give an entirely new orientation to the European war then bogged down in Flanders. It superimposed a completely new world of elemental power on the death throes of an anemic Europe, a Europe that was stupidly destroying itself as a world power. In a few decades, two giant land masses would bring to an end two thousand years of European expansion. From 1917 on, the war of Europe

was no longer anything but civil war; the world was changing forever. There is no explaining the First World War without an examination in depth of the role that the United States of America assumed between 1914 and 1918. Who at that time was the driving force in the United States? Everyone spoke of Wilson, who quickly became considered the master of humanity's destiny. On the other hand, few speak of Colonel House, a secret, almost mythical figure, who was the all-powerful mentor of President Wilson. Who was this shadowy Colonel House? Who, indeed, was Wilson?

* * *

Woodrow Wilson, the president of the United States, was an austere and strict Calvinist, the son, grandson, and son-in-law of Presbyterian ministers. “He said his prayers on his knees morning and night throughout his life. He read the Bible every day. He wore out two or three Bibles in the course of his life. He said grace before every meal." (Bullitt, *President Wilson*, p.36). Bullitt has left an impressive portrait of this "puny fellow" with the "big soft mouth": He had light gray eyes and lackluster blond hair. He was thin, pale, and weak. His eyesight was extraordinarily deficient. He was hardly out of his baby clothes when he had to wear glasses. Moreover, from infancy on he had intestinal trouble which plagued him throughout his life. He was coddled by his father, his mother, and his two older sisters, but these troubles persisted, giving him migraine headaches and stomach ailments. He was so sickly that his parents didn't send him to school. He didn't learn the alphabet until he was nine years old and didn't know how to read until he was eleven." His homely features were made still more plain by the eyeglasses riding on his prominent nose and by his astonishingly bad teeth. Although he never smoked, they were mottled with caries, so that when he smiled, brown and blue stains appeared amid flashes of gold. He had a livid complexion, with unhealthy red blotches. His legs were too short for his body, so that he looked more distinguished seated than standing. He was so poorly informed about international affairs that he couldn't tell one country from another on a map. Parsimonious, he was horrified at the cost of a cable and hesitated a long time before sending one. His only diversions were billiards and proper family reading sessions in the evening.

Looked at this way, however, the portrait of Woodrow Wilson does not adhere strictly to the realities, or as least it is not complete, because throughout his career Wilson was simply a screen for others. The real master of the United States in those days, right up to the fateful Versailles peace conference was not Wilson but the man who owned him outright and had made him president of the United States and partner in 1917 of the Allies in the First World War. This mentor of Wilson's was a mysterious "colonel" who did not occupy any official post whatsoever. Secret, insinuating, he worked strictly behind the scenes and under cover. He was not even a colonel. His name was Edward Mandell House. "The public was mystified, that's for certain," wrote Charles Seymour, the well-known American history professor. House's father, of Jewish origins, had come

from England; his middle name was that of a Jewish merchant who was a friend of his father. His father, on arriving in America, had first been a Mexican citizen. Then he had fought to make Texas into a republic. Astutely, he had taken his pay for that collaboration in land. Later he parted company with the federal government to the North, then threw in his lot with it anew. "Four different flags," he laconically said. The family became very rich through the trade in cotton by sea during the "somber and stormy" nights of the War between the States. Arms trade and munitions made them money as well. These activities were capped by the purchase of an entire block in the city of Galveston. The son, Wilson's future manager, was raised there in an environment of gunpowder. "My brother," he related, "one day had half of his face blown off. He remained disfigured for the rest of his life. I don't know how I managed not to kill myself a hundred times over." In school he carried a little pocket arsenal: "In addition to a revolver, I had a big knife. Those weapons let me keep my comrades at a respectful distance." He spent some time in the mountains "where he could do some shooting."

When he was seventeen years old he fell in love with another kind of fighting: political battles, and became a sort of secret agent for William Tilden, the Democratic presidential candidate in 1876. "I ended up realizing that two or three senators and a like number of representatives, in concert with the president, directed the affairs of the country all by themselves." In twenty-five years he would succeed in reserving the direction of the country for himself, not just sharing it with two or three senators. Was he at least a normal being? "One day," he recounted, "when I was soaring very high on a swing, one of the ropes broke and I fell on my head." Did it crack? In any event, the rope of the political swing did not break. His father died and left him a large fortune made during the Civil War, and House set out to conquer Texas politically.

Texas in those days, as he described it, was "a frontier state where the law was in the service of the individual with the keenest eye and the quickest hand, and where you died with your boots on." One day, in a bar in Colorado, a giant of a man insulted him: "I grabbed my six-shooter and cocked it, but the bartender jumped over the counter and threw himself between us. Five more seconds and I'd have killed my man."

Thus prepared, he embarked on the career which would one day make him the man who directed the thinking of America's president. House became the campaign director for a gubernatorial candidate of the Democratic party, a man named Hogg, who was elected primarily because of House's drive. "That campaign," House recalled, "was a real battle." Thanks to Hogg, House was abruptly promoted from a Colorado barroom brawler to the rank of colonel. Afterwards he would never be called anything but "the colonel." Colonel of what? Of nothing. He had never passed a single hour of his life in a military barracks, but Governor Hogg had the power at that time in Texas to name anyone at all an honorary colonel.

* * *

Texas grew too small for him. "I'm beginning to get tired of it," he sighed. "Go to the front lines! That's where you belong from now on!" Hogg told him. The front was the East Coast; it was New York. His attention was drawn to the governor of New Jersey, a man named Woodrow Wilson. According to police records, he hadn't killed or robbed anyone; his speeches, very academic, were oiled with an abundance of the moral platitudes so dear to the voters, and he was said to be easily managed. Prime presidential material! proposed House, his choice made, immediately mobilized his agents: "I prop to divide the forty Texans into four squads and to entrust each squad with the assault on one of the doubtful Southern states." He set up propaganda centers in every city, as would nowadays be done in the launching of a new brand of detergent. On November 5, 1912, Woodrow Wilson, riding on the shoulders of Colonel House, was elected to the presidency. Wilson formed his first cabinet, and House made it a point not to accept any post. But his hand was everywhere, invisible, and quick as lightning. At the end of 1913, when Wilson sent him to see Wilhelm II, he had armed him with this simple and astonishing introduction: "In the United States, he is the Power behind the Throne." It was Wilson himself who spelled power with a capital P. It was in that capacity that Wilhelm II was going to receive him, and it was from that time we date the first attempt of the U.S. to avert the European war. That "Power" was going to become the supreme power not only of the United States, but, the following year, of the First World War. Without the secret but persistent intrigues of this manipulator, there would not have been any Treaty of Versailles, still less the Second World War, the poisonous mushroom spawned out of the rottenness of the preceding one. Colonel House was the key figure of 1914-1918.

In the Europe of those years no one even suspected House's existence, apart from a few heads of state and, in 1919, a dozen leaders of the so- called "peace" conference. Clemenceau in private would call him the "supercivilized escapee from the wilds of Texas." For the world as a whole, there was only Wilson. Wilson would be received at Paris in January 1919 as the most important luminary in the world. The man who was really the most important, however, and had been since 1913, was the other one, the shadow, for whom a hotel room sufficed in Berlin, in London, or in Paris. In 1917 and 1918, in furtive silence, House would bring to the Allies, those devourers of men, two million fine American lads, not to mention billions of dollars and prodigious quantities of raw materials. House gained his mastery over Wilson all the more swiftly because the latter had always lived phenomenally aloof from European problems. "Mr. Wilson," Colonel House quite crudely explained, "had no experience with affairs of state." He added: "The attitude of President Wilson with regard to the European situation bordered on indifference." That indifference was natural enough. The platform on which Wilson had made it to the presidency of the United States would have given one to believe that the world didn't exist beyond the Potomac. "The Democratic platform," House noted, "does not contain a single word on the subject of foreign relations or problems, except for one allusion to the Philippines. " That indifference was in truth shared by nearly all

of America. At the beginning of Wilson's presidency," House frankly related, "there were few citizens of the United States who could claim any knowledge of European affairs of state or who had any interest in them." (Intimate Papers of Colonel House, vol. 1, p. 272) As for diplomats, the incoming President Wilson, who took office in 1913, was ill-served in a way scarcely possible to imagine. All the important diplomatic posts of the United States were distributed after the elections almost by auction among the electoral supporters of the new president, whatever their degree of ignorance.

"I am being swamped by office seekers," House moaned. "Job applicants are driving me crazy! Six hundred employment requests for a single post. Everybody wants something. All the eccentrics in the country are at my heels. A hungry pack," he concluded. House had to pass on the candidates for federal judgeships. Two were too fat. Another had no chin. There was only one left who was presentable. "I still have someone to recommend," House went on to say, patient as Job, "but he has a big wart behind his ear, and I shall recommend to him that he take care not to show that side of his head."

In the appointment of new ambassadors-the proceding ones, the Republicans, having been swept aside like empty food cans-the precedure was no different. "The people running the party saw nothing in the post of ambassador but the means of giving an appointment to political figures whose support it was important to hang onto." (House, I, 210) Wilson had finally sent as ambassador to Berlin a judge who had got the position from House when he himself recognized that he had no chance of obtaining it on merit. As for the new American ambassador to London, he didn't know even the rudiments of the job. "That man," House tells us almost jeeringly, "asked Mr. Bryan (the secretary of state) to be so kind as to reserve a place for him in the kindergarten so that he might learn the essentials of his job as quickly as possible. Bryan laughingly replied: 'First I'd have to learn them myself.' " The ambassadorial candidate for kindergarten was named Gerard. When he had arrived in London, he'd had to resolve "the infernal questions of dress," and was condemned to wear knee-breeches to ceremonies at the court. "I find," this impromptu diplomat wrote, "that it is a laborious task taking a duchess to dinner." The Berlin staff as well had not found it easy to fit in at the imperial salons. "We Americans," Gerard, the new ambassador, wrote to House, describing his first trip through Berlin in the retinue of the court, "had rather a lugubrious air in our black tails. We must have looked like a burial procession in those carriages all enclosed in glass." They were called "the black crows" there. These newly appointed diplomats had all set out aimlessly, to Berlin as to London, without having received a single line of instructions from Wilson. "A short time after the appointment of Mr. Page to the embassy to the court of St. James," House recounted, "I asked Wilson if he had given the new ambassador any additional instructions. The president replied in the negative." As the British prime minister would one day say, "They were skating on thin ice."

CHAPTER XXX

Chapter 30

America Chooses Sides

Wilson lived modestly. When House stayed with him, they shared the same bathroom. After the evening meal the president would read the "Adventures in Arcadia" aloud. He would wind up the clock, let the cats out, and be up at six thirty the next morning. His White House guests were not overindulged: "There was nothing to smoke and only water to drink," recalls House. "He appeared literally incapable of handling more than one thought at a time, "I regret to say," wrote House, "he would sometimes act on very important matters with hardly any consideration." (House, I, p. 103). Behind this presidential front, House made his own moves unobtrusively. "He could walk on dead leaves as silently as a tiger," said Senator Gore. House enjoyed his power behind the throne, and for eight years he would pull the strings of presidential power. Wilson appeared quite comfortable with the arrangement: "Mr. House is my alter ego. He is myself independent from me. His thoughts and mine are one." House exercised his power as unelected president in the affairs of Europe, which at that time were not of the slightest interest to the public or the politicians. The world would witness the strange spectacle of a United States president accompanying House to his train in the most deferential manner. "Colonel" Mandell House was being sent off to Europe to represent the United States and the president among foreign rulers without any official mandate. From January 1914 to the end of July 1914 he sent Wilson numerous letters conveying his interpretation of what ailed Europe: the conflicts were idiotic and only a non-European arbiter could bring them to an end. In Europe, House created an exotic impression. German generals tried to talk military strategy with the "colonel" without much success. House finally explained he was more a political strategist than a field tactician and went on to meet the Kaiser. The Kaiser received House warmly at Potsdam: "His English is clear and concise," House wrote Wilson, "He is too much of a gentleman to monopolize the conversation. He speaks and he listens. He wants peace because Germany's interest demands it. He expresses good will and admiration for England." House revealed his plans for peace: "I told the Kaiser why I undertook my mission and why I was in Germany in the

first place. I wanted to talk with him. An American would probably be better than a European in solving problems." House was very proud to announce that the Kaiser had accepted his "conclusions": "I have succeeded as much as I could have expected. I am very satisfied with the result." House believed that the only threat to peace was the Kaiser and that since he had won him over he had in fact solved every problem. All that remained was a formality: a visit to Paris and London in order to seal peace in Europe. It would be in these two cities, however, that House would experience patent failure.

In Paris the politicians were playing musical chairs as usual. During the Third Republic Frenchmen were ruled by an average of 500 ministers per decade. House arrived in the midst of a frantic shuffle of portfolios. He could find no one to whom he could talk about his mission. In any event Paris was totally absorbed in the Madame Caillaux affair, which had chased all other issues from the headlines for more than a month. There was no way House could compete with such an attraction. He left Paris on June 9, 1914 empty-handed. In London he met with similar lack of interest: "London is completely involved in the social whirl. It is impossible to do any business now. People only think about Ascot and garden parties. I am on barren ground," House wrote. For the most part he would meet people who studiously avoided responsibility. He finally managed to be received by Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey, whose main interest lay in fishing and bird calls. He knew 41 different calls, he informed House. House found him "uninformed about the United States and its institutions." Everywhere he went, he tried to sell his peace plan: "I insist on the importance of adopting a precise policy of international collaboration aimed at practical goals."

This was exactly what his pompous interlocutors did not want. House compared the various attitudes: Berlin was unequivocally positive, in Paris no one wanted to talk to him, and London was deathly afraid of talking peace, indeed even of the possibility of talking peace.

At that time the Sarajevo assassination had not yet occurred. There was no official display of anti-German posturing, although the British Establishment hated German trade competitors. Two months later the British government and press would noisily broadcast that the Kaiser had wanted the war. In mid-June 1914, however, he was the only one who took the time to listen and to approve of House's plan. He alone accepted American mediation to preserve peace in Europe. House was at a loss to explain why the others had proved to be un cooperative. Grey hinted a reason: "I must take French and Russian susceptibilities into account." (House, I, 307) Why would peace talks upset the French and the Russians? Sir William Tyrell shared Grey's concern: "I am looking for a way to approach the Germans without upsetting the Entente's other members." The admission was revealing. The situation was growing urgent: by then a whole week had elapsed after the July 3, 1914 Sarajevo assassination. The British government even refused a verbal communication with Germany. House tried in vain: "I attempted to get an answer before my departure, but Sir Edward diplomatically sidestepped the issue."

With this final brush-off House wrote the Kaiser a three-page letter on July 9, 1914: My purpose in undertaking this journey was to find out the possibilities of creating a more cordial relationship among the great powers. Considering the prominent position Your Majesty occupies in the world and its well-known desire to maintain peace, I went immediately to Berlin as Your Majesty knows. I will never forget Your Majesty's kindly support of the plan conveyed by my mission as well as the clear exposition concerning present world conditions kindly offered by Your Majesty. Your Majesty gave me all the assurances of its benevolent approval concerning my President's project. I left Germany happy at the thought that Your Majesty would use its high influence in favor of peace. In England he had not been able to see the British monarch from near or far while in Postdam he had been invited to the emperor's table and had been free to converse with him at length. The British ministers who had welcomed him were extremely evasive; House was seen as a untimely nuisance.

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Wilson was still elated at House's Berlin success and thought peace was at hand: "Your letter from Paris," the president wrote, "written as soon as you left Berlin caused me a profound joy. I believe and I hope you have laid the first foundation for a great achievement." On July 31, 1914 House wrote his last letter to the president: I have failed to convey to them the urgent necessity for immediate action. Thus they let things drag on without giving me the definitive answer which I wanted to send to the Kaiser. If my project could have been advanced further Germany could have exerted pressure on Austria and the cause of peace might have been saved. Forty-five days had gone by in London and House had not convinced anybody. Professor Charles Seymour of Yale would write after the war: "If only the British had decided to consider House's proposals in time we might have reached an international agreement before the Sarajevo murder." "My government," concluded Page, United States ambassador in London, "did everything in its power to prevent war."

The governments of France and Britain had demonstrated their bellicosity by rejecting the American offer. They were set on war and were not about to be sidetracked into peace. The Kaiser often said during his post-war Dutch exile: "House's visit in Berlin during the spring of 1914 almost prevented the war." The Allies' lust for war was such that even when the Germans had the advantage they still refused to negotiate, regardless of the frightful cost in lives. House would later switch over to the British side but at the time he left no doubt as who was responsible for the war: "I am often asked who is responsible for the war," he wrote on April 15, 1915. "I never commit myself. But here I can say what I think: I do not believe the Kaiser wanted the war. "

For two more years Wilson would several times sincerely attempt peace negotiations, while at the same time House drew closer and closer to the Allies. Wilson's efforts were cause for marked irritation among the Allies, whose unswerving goal was to crush Germany. Nothing else was allowed to intervene. Apart from his desire for peace Wilson's persistent efforts were also undertaken with an eye on

the electorate, which was almost unanimously neutralist. Until April 1917 the United States government maintained its course for peace. In the end, it took all of House and Balfour's mastery of intrigue to railroad America into the war.

CHAPTER XXXI

Chapter 31

Big Business

By the fall of 1914 American big business had a clear perception that the European war, horrible as it was, could translate into windfall profits. Wilson's peace efforts had weakened the impact of the charge of war profiteering, and business felt justified to seize the opportunity of the century. Within a few years the United States, with only four and a half million industrial workers at the beginning of 1900, would become not only the granary of the world but an industrial giant. The warring nations needed American raw materials: copper production would increase by half in four years, zinc production would double, steel would jump from 33 to 45 million tons, coal production would increase by 172 million tons. America's industrial capacity would increase five-fold in the years after 1914. Shipbuilding would reach three million tons compared to 200,000 in 1914. Industrial profits would soar between 20 to 50 per cent. American exports would grow in four years of war as much as in the preceding 125 years of American history. Wheat and flour exports would double, meat and steel exports would quadruple. The economics of the war would make America-based banks the recipients of half the world's gold.

As a whole banking in the Americas benefited from the European upheaval. Massive markets in South America, which until this point had been controlled by British capitalists, opened to American business. American investment in Latin America increased 13 times in these few short years, and American companies came to control more than two thirds of all fruit, rubber, sugar, oil, nitrate and copper exports. American businesses would gain 47 per cent of Brazil's international trade and 50 per cent of Venezuela's during the war years, and would export twice as much as the British companies. American-based banks moved into Latin America. Morgan Guarantee Trust in Argentina, Mercantile in Venezuela and Peru, National City in Brazil and Uruguay were only the most important. Yet, although the war had created opportunities for the banks, the great majority of Americans still regarded it as an incomprehensible conflict in which the United States should avoid any involvement. From the

outset the Allies had bombarded America with anti-German atrocity stories. Their impact was limited, because aside from the neutralist sentiments of the people, the American news media, much of which was controlled by influential Jews, was pro-German for its own reasons. Jewish money and manpower had been heavily invested in the Bolshevik revolution, and regarded Germany as a vital component in their bid to overthrow the Russian government and install a Communist regime. It was not until 1917 that Germany outlived its usefulness: by then, the tsar had been overthrown and the Kaiser had proved himself useless in convincing his Turkish allies to relinquish their Palestinian province as a home for the Jews. Although the Turks were unwilling to let go of Palestine, particularly at a time when the fortunes of war were weighing in their favor, the British Establishment was more than eager to promise Palestine to the Jews of the world in exchange for a favor. Lord Balfour transacted the bargain: as a consideration for Jewish assistance in bringing America into the war on the British side, the government of Great Britain would deliver Palestine into Jewish hands once the war had been won. This British promissary note became known as the Balfour Declaration. Jewish assistance was indeed invaluable in reversing almost overnight America's entrenched neutralism. Suddenly Allied propaganda received full coverage in American newspapers. From 1917 the public was fed fantastic stories dressed up as news, such as the "discovery" that the Germans had secret gun emplacements in the United States ready to bombard New York and Washington. This alarming "news" had been planted by the Allies as early as October 1914 and had succeeded in finding its way into presidential intelligence reports: "We have good reason," said an alarmed Wilson to House, "to believe that the Germans have built in our own country concrete platforms for guns as powerful as the ones they are using in Belgium and France. As far as I am concerned I do not say aloud what I know of this report. If it got out the whole country would be stirred to such an extent that I fear the consequences." Despite his credulity, at the time Wilson wanted peace, but it was remarkable that he could believe such obviously absurd information, to the point of ordering an army general to conduct an inquiry "with the utmost discretion." There was also the "revelation" that the German military attaché in Washington was going to blow up New York's port and subway. An official inquiry disproved the rumor.

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House understood the power of rumor mills and manipulated news. In the early days he tried to calm Wilson down: "General Wood's inquiry will demonstrate the inanity of these rumors. Most misunderstandings are caused by lying reports or come from sowers of discord." Thus, in the early years of the war, all Allied efforts to bring the United States into the war failed. The British ambassador in Washington regretfully reported: "At least 8507o of the Americans want neutrality." Wilson knew that; he also knew it would be political suicide to oppose neutrality in his 1916 bid for a second term. Neutrality was Wilson's campaign theme. He called for "strict neutrality, a real spirit of neutrality, a spirit of impartiality and goodwill towards all interested parties" at every

opportunity. During the election campaign Wilson, indeed, placed the Germans on the same footing as the British.

Wilson's relationship with Germany was nevertheless an ambivalent one. He knew almost nothing of German history and culture and had a deep hatred of German philosphers, or rather his conception of them. Somewhat in line with Clemenceau's railing against the Munich beer halls as temples of German thought, Wilson explained as early as August 1914, his aversion: "German philosophy is essentially an egotistic concept, devoid of any spirituality." Where had Wilson gotten such an interpretation so devoid of knowledge and rationality? As a Calvinist, he regarded Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer as threats to his religious convictions and his concept of politics. In his mind the German philosophers, not the kaiser, were responsible for the war. Wilson's irrational hatred was shared by most of his cabinet, which included a strong contingent of pro-British sympathizers as well. The secretary of state, William Jennings Bryan, whose son-in-law was serving as a British officer, was told by his cabinet colleague, Lane, on May 5, 1915: "I believe not a single cabinet member has a drop of Teuton blood in his veins. Two among us were born British; two of my cousins and three of Mrs. Lane's cousins are now fighting in the British army." House felt it necessary to caution the members: "We must be very careful in the way we act because as you know the Americans are very emotional." (House, I, 351) House's reference to American emotionality epitomized the attitude of the Washington pro-British elite towards the people they ruled: the Americans like a potentially hostile mass, had to be treated cautiously, and manipulated into accepting what was deemed best for them by their British betters.

Ambassador Page, who represented the United States in London, found it hard to hide his pro-British fervor, and became a relentless propagandist for the British Establishment. House, forgetting how condescendingly he'd been treated in London (or possibly because of it) became an eager errand boy for the lofty British lords. Exercising the caution he had urged on the members of cabinet, he devised a secret code to communicate with the British ambassador in Washington. Starting out by being the ambassador's confidant, he became his accomplice. For the first two years of the war Washington was the scene of amazing double dealing. Officially the government loudly proclaimed its neutrality, with Wilson declaring: "This is a war which does not affect us in any way. Its causes are totally alien to us." (House, I, 342) While the American people were lapping up these fine speeches which reflected their own views, their elected representatives were sabotaging the very neutrality they had been entrusted to preserve.

Wilson's aversion to Germans was somewhat mitigated by his political aspirations. He planned to launch another peace offensive. After the German victories of August 1914, Wilson wrote to Zimmermann on September 5, 1914: "Now that the Kaiser has just demonstrated so well the strength of his armies, wouldn't he find that if he accepted peace negotiations today, he would make a gesture which would confirm the peaceful intentions he has always been proud of?" The

German ambassador in Washington immediately informed House: "If the Entente is sending a signal, Germany will show itself reasonable." (House, I, 383) After conversing with the ambassador, House recorded in his diary on December 27, 1914: "If I could obtain from the Allies their consent to start negotiations I would find the Germans very well disposed."

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The British foreign minister, Sir Edward Grey was less forthcoming: "All we can promise here, if Germany sincerely and seriously seeks peace, is that I will agree to consult our friends on conditions they will deem acceptable." House had been received by Grey in London but he was given a lecture on English blackbirds as compared to the Texan variety. Grey had refused to discuss any peace proposals except to ask House: "The president must not talk about peace conditions."

House was told in London that the British government would send one and a half million more troops to the war zone and "like Wellington at Waterloo, catch the fox by the tail." The French government was also disinclined to talk of peace. House noted: "They not only want Alsace-Lorraine but much more. Thus one cannot even envisage peace." (House, I, 447) French bureaucrats and politicians alike were blunt with House: they did not want to hear anything about peace. House was perceptive enough to establish the wide difference between the rulers of France and the great mass of Frenchmen: "In France," he wrote President Wilson, "the ruling classes do not want peace but the majority of the people and the men in the trenches all want peace very much." Back in Britain, House had come to similar conclusion: "The war has not rallied the approval of the English people and if public opinion were to be heard, one would see how really unpopular the war was." The horrors of war, instead of sobering governments, would inflame them even more. Greed was overpowering. The allies Britain had recruited from the far corners of the earth regarded peace as a blight on their spoils of war. "South Africa," noted House, "has no intention of giving up German Africa, which it has seized ... Australia likewise will not give up German Oceania."

Since the Allied spring offensive of 1915 had failed miserably, the Allies decided to starve the Germans into submission by a blockade. The employment and conduct of blockades was strictly regulated by international law. The British had been the prime advocates for the protection of neutral vessels throughout the seas. The first Hague Conference had enshrined the "inviolability of private property during naval warfare" and the second had, at Sir Edward Grey's urging, "consented to renounce all principles defining contraband during warfare." At the 1907 Hague Conference the British declared: In order to decrease the difficulties of neutral trading countries in time of war, His Majesty's government is ready to forego the principle of wartime contraband with nations willing to sign a convention to this effect. The right of inspection will be maintained only for the purpose of verifying the merchant ships' neutrality." (House, I, 456) The British state secretary Root supported these same principles, i.e. the guaranteed

immunity of the belligerents' private property on the seas: "Only the contraband of arms and munitions would be prohibited. Transport of goods and raw material would be free of all controls and free of any hindrance."

These declarations represented British interests then. In 1907 the British establishment's lifeline and power depended on the importation of goods and raw material from the rest of the world. When their own treaties and declarations no longer suited them, however, the British government deliberately violated the 1907 Hague Treaty, as well as all the other international treaties it had signed. It was like changing the rules of cricket in the middle of the game. When war broke out the British ignored the provisions of the treaties they signed: they intercepted neutral vessels, including American vessels, and imposed a forced sale of their contents. On September 6, 1914 House informed Wilson: "Britain is preventing access to neutral ports. First it inspects the ship's contents, and if there is foodstuff a forced sale is imposed." (House, I, 366) The outrage was so flagrant that even the pro-British cabinet member Lane was prompted to write on May 5, 1915 to House: The British are not behaving well. They are detaining our vessels; they have created a new international code. We have shown much indulgence and tolerance for the way they have taken the seas as their private toll-gates. (House, I, 512) House declared the British practice "illegal" and stated on June 2, 1915: "The British people would never have tolerated such practices if they had been in our position." (House, I, 520) The American voters were getting irate: How dare the British stop American exports? House felt the danger and on June 3, 1915 warned Wilson: "The British put everybody in the same bag regardless of nationality."

On March 9, 1915 the publisher of the San Francisco Daily Chronicle was the first to demand retribution against British law-breaking: "Britain was wrong in declaring a blockade against Germany. If Britain further persists, our government will be totally justified in putting an embargo on war materiel." Lloyd George panicked at that prospect writing House on June 2, 1915: "The cause of the Allies would be seriously threatened if the Americans stopped supplying their armies at this time." (House, I, 518) House tried to convince the British to return to a less vexing conception of international law. Without consulting their partners at the Hague, they had disregarded their own signatures on the treaties and embarked on a piratical policy against the nations of the entire world. Wilson wanted some kind of "gentleman's agreement" to end this flagrant violation of international law. He proposed that "the nomenclature of contraband goods be limited to war materiel only and all the rest have total commercial freedom. Merchant vessels, whether neutral or belligerent, must travel freely outside territorial waters as long as they do not carry contraband thus defined." Wilson's proposal to the British was almost identical to the instructions Sir Edward Grey had given his delegates at the 1907 Hague Conference. House pointed out it should not be difficult for the British to honor their treaty obligations since they had the most to benefit: "The threat of submarine warfare would be removed. According to the principle of freedom of the seas the country with the most overseas colonies would benefit the most. Britain would get the

lion's share (of the agreement)." (House, I, 458) For the British Establishment, however, the lion's share was far from enough: it wanted all and everything. Since Philip II of Spain and NapoLéon of France had confronted the British monopoly of the seas without success, it was unlikely that House and Wilson would have much impact on the rulers of the City, London's financial nerve center. The Germans welcomed Wilson's proposals. German diplomat Dernberg informed Washington: "If Britain accepts freedom of the seas, the Germans will immediately evacuate Belgium." (House, I, 461) Wilson's good intentions were, however, thwarted within his own cabinet by the pro- British lobby. The president instructed his ambassador in London "to present his views with the utmost vigor." To this presidential order, Ambassador Page replied that he had no desire to present any such views to the British government. German compromise and American peace moves did not interest the British government, the chief objective of which at that time was to draw the United States into the war. The British wanted to tap America's dollars and America's young men for their war. Grey rejected Wilson's offer with polite cynicism: "The United States' entry into the war is of great benefit to Great Britain, while acceding to your demand would mean that we would be acting as a neutral." (House, I, 468)

Wilson's efforts were given wide publicity to impress American voters, who were getting more and more outraged with British violations, but behind the scenes the British lobby was inexorably dragging America into the war. House felt confident in writing: "The President sympathizes from the bottom of his heart with the cause and aims of the Allies." (House, I, 520). House was then playing a double game: vocal protestations of neutrality for the sake of the electorate, while scheming with the British to destroy America's neutrality. On June 1, 1915 House was able, before leaving

London, to inform the British cabinet confidentially: "It is my firm intention to insist that the President does not wage a token war. We must join it with all the strength, the virility and tenacity of our people in such a way that Europe will remember our intervention for at least a century." The date was significant: June 1, 1915. American participation had already been decided on and it would not be a token war. House, somewhat carried away by his war fervor, cabled Wilson: "Our intervention will decrease rather than increase human losses." The American young men who would die on the Argonne front in 1918 would sadly contradict House's absurd statement.

CHAPTER XXXII

Chapter 32

The Lusitania Affair

For one year the American people had been led to believe what their government was saying, never knowing what it was scheming. As early as February 1915 the British were quite sure they could get away with anything, so much so they had not hesitated in using the American flag on their own vessels. One could well imagine the international outcry if German ships had done the same thing. "Washington," wrote Professor Seymour (House, I, 404), "advised Great Britain as to the dangers of flying American flags on her ships without any authorization." This maritime fraud was, of course, known to the Germans. Strangely, House's humbling experience in England did not prevent him from returning as a discreet and reliable British ally. The American electorate had still to be handled with care. The 1916 elections had to be won because a defeat could threaten the administration's war plans.

President Wilson organized days of prayers for peace. That suited everybody, especially those who envisioned spending the war reaping profits from it. There was, however, a danger that the banks involved in financing the various belligerents would be damaged in the conflict. The lending institutions would be hard put not to take sides when it came to protecting their investments. A defeated side could well drag leaders down with it. The Allies' large fleet qualified them as preferred borrowers. There were large quantities of cotton and munitions to be sold and shipped. The American public was sold the notion that such loans would be good for business and prosperity. Wilson helped the loan program when he informed the banks: "The government sees no objection in opening banking credits to all belligerents." In theory it sounded impartial but in reality the Allies would receive 95 per cent of the loans and Germany 5 per cent. Professor Pierre Renouvin, a staunch supporter of the Allies, had to admit: "American economic and financial relations were almost exclusively tied to Great Britain and France. How could such a situation not have political consequences? The neutrality of the United States is no longer impartial." At the beginning this imbalance was not an issue. House maintained: "We will act

not only to save civilization but also for our own benefit." To the banks, the Allies were attractive clients. They paid well and on time with money borrowed from the United States government.

* * *

The Germans had not reacted violently to this situation. They were finding alternatives. Cut off from the sea, they supplied themselves by land. They increased their purchases from Norway by 80 per cent, from Denmark and Sweden by 200 per cent. They would even buy English tea in Sweden. The British have always had a very flexible conscience when it came to looking after their own interests: they would attack neutral vessels carrying goods to Germany and at the same time sell their surpluses even if they knew the Germans would eventually use them. Professor Renouvin explained this mercantile practice: "In order to reduce trade deficits Great Britain thought it wise to re-export their surpluses even if the enemy would eventually profit by that. As the Entente's banker, the British government ranked financial considerations above all else." Thus the British were fencing to the Germans what they had piratically rifled from neutral ships, and neutral ships were sunk with increasing frequency by the British navy.

Reaction against British piracy was offset by the German sinking of the Lusitania on May 7, 1915, off the southern coast of Ireland. The tragedy was used as a propaganda bonanza by the British lobby in the United States. The liner was British, not American, but one hundred and eighteen of her passengers were United States citizens. "We will be at war with Germany within a month," declared House. Page, the pro-British United States ambassador in London was elated, and cynically hoped for another such sinking. On July 21, 1915 he cabled House: "It is strange to say but I only see one solution to the present situation: a new outrage like the Lusitania sinking that would force us into war." On January 11, 1916 House cabled Wilson with similar cynicism: "England should be grateful for all acts of terrorism committed by Germany because each person-man, woman or child-killed on land or sea, is dying for England."

Facts mattered little, everything was used for the propaganda mills. In 1914 the British story that Germans were cutting off children's hands had done wonders on the propaganda front and so had the British version of the Lusitania sinking. House cabled Wilson again to tell him how happy he was that the German zeppelins had bombed London and killed two hundred people. He quoted the remark of British minister on the matter: "It's a pity they did not shake up the west of England, where recruitment has been lagging."

* * *

The Lusitania gave the American press a field day. There was an explosion of journalistic outrage about the murder of innocent tourists. The massive press exploitation of these unfortunate passengers was decisive. It did not drag America into the war within a month as House had predicted, but it nearly did away with America's neutrality. The Lusitania victims were combined with

the stories of German gun emplacements in Brooklyn, the cutting off of Belgian children's hands and other barbarities. The Germans had now become Teutons and Huns. It took half a century to establish the truth about the Lusitania. An underwater exploration of the sunken ship revealed that its hulls were full of ammunition. The British arms dealers had used tourists to camouflage their war materiel. They had used twelve hundred lives to hide their contraband and collect their ill-gotten gains. The Germans were aware of this deception and were well within the bounds of international law by attacking an arms-carrying enemy vessel. The Lusitania was a warship disguised as an ocean liner by the British arms merchants. They lured twelve hundred innocent people to their deaths and they alone bear the guilt of this tragedy. As they unconscionably flew American flags on British ships to cover up their trafficking, so did they use innocent people.

The truth about the Lusitania came half a century late. It was historically important but was of no relevance to the events of World War I. The case illustrates well that truth at the time is better than the truth later. The Germans were overwhelmed by the superior British propaganda machine. The sheer weight of its pervasive influence could turn lies into facts throughout the world. Germany was never able to put its side of the story across for lack of a propaganda network, and was forced to go along with British fraud. It indemnified families of American citizens lost in action and undertook not to attack passenger-carrying vessels "without due warning" and not before "the lives of non-combatants had been ensured protection."

Such a declaration made all German submarines vulnerable. How could submarines inspect armed vessels like the Lusitania without being shot at as soon as they surfaced? They would be blown apart in short order. Furthermore, the Lusitania incident supplied the excuse to place guns on American merchant vessels. Thus, for a year and a half, the entire German submarine fleet would be restricted to its bases in Germany while the Allies plied the seas as they wished. This one-sided imposition on the German government was deemed intolerable even by members of the Wilson administration. On October 2, 1915 the secretary of state told House: "If our merchant ships are armed, they will have every advantage over enemy submarines expected not to fire without warning. The British cannot have their cake and eat it too. It is unfair to force a submarine to warn a ship likely to use the warning time to sink it." Even the most pro-British member of the Wilson administration, Ambassador Page, remarked on February 1, 1916: Submarines are a recognized weapon of war as far as the British are concerned, as they are also using them. It seems absured to me to expect a submarine to surface and be responsible for the security of the passengers and crew and at the same time make itself a target. Merchant vessels not only shoot submarines on sight but are certainly ordered to do so. British minister Arthur Balfour confirmed this view: "If the captain of a merchant ship discovered a submarine across the bow it is my opinion very likely that he would endeavor to ram it. I frankly admit that if I were in command of that ship I would act likewise." (House, II, 240) Meanwhile, House was attempting a last

maneuver: on February 18, 1916 he sent to the Allied ambassadors an unofficial note proposing to disarm all merchant ships. In return they would no longer be attacked without warning or torpedoed unless they resisted or attempted to escape. The Allies did not hide their displeasure. How could the British not be displeased by attempts to thwart their piracy? British provocation on the seas was one way to bring the United States into the war sooner or later. For the plan to succeed it was necessary that German submarines sink as many American vessels as possible. It was the only way to turn American public opinion in favor of war. From then on the top priority British objective was to drive German submarines to sink American ships.

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The American public would put up with two or three more sinkings. After that it was easy for the press to stampede people. Submarine warfare was the Allies' trump card, guaranteed to bring America into the war. The Allies had found the battlefields quite punishing and were looking forward to the arrival of millions of American soldiers and billions of American dollars. Any maritime agreement had to be strenuously opposed. The blockade would force the Germans into naval warfare involving American vessels, which in turn would force America to join and win the war for the Allies. Although House went along, others had reservations. Secretary of State Lansing objected to being made an unwilling accomplice in a flagrant violation of international law. On February 3, 1916 he stated: "Since all merchant ships coming to America have been armed with guns I believe we are really asking too much of Germany." For the preceding twenty months, Germany had acquiesced to the point of being virtually at the mercy of the allies on every sea lane. But the British government needed blood, not conciliation. Provocations were multiplied. Germany was left to choose between defeat or self-defense. Either way would play into British hands. On February 29, 1916 Germany was forced to declare that from now on "armed merchant vessels would be considered as auxiliary cruisers and treated as such."

It was now easy for Wilson to demand with indignation that Germany guarantee the life of American passengers on British vessels. He did not suggest how the Germans could possibly distinguish Americans from other passengers. Most Americans did not realize a war was on. Professor Seymour wrote: "The onus is on the travel lovers to avoid using belligerent vessels when their presence on board is likely to lead to international incidents. By refraining from crossing the combat zone Americans would no longer imperil themselves." The Germans had set aside specific combat zones which had been recognized by the United States: "Congress did not want a military confrontation with Germany. It adopted the German definition." (House, II, 244)

This wise decision exasperated Wilson. He opposed Congress on the issue: "I cannot consent to any restrictions concerning the rights of American citizens." (House, II, 245) The statement was irrational. Restrictions as to war zones did protect people from getting killed. Such restrictions are in effect daily, as in people being detoured from the paths of an avalanche or the scene of a fire. It was

not necessary for Americans to board armed vessels to go to Europe. There were many alternatives. Wilson's grandstanding on American rights was obviously linked with British provocation. House was concerned that the president had overplayed his hand: "The president and Lansing have, I believe, put themselves into a mess." All the polls indicated that 90 per cent of Americans were still opposed to any military intervention in the European war. Within a year a handful of provocateurs would use the submarine issue to bring America to the edge of disaster. Unfortunately, the American people did not know they were being hoodwinked.

The two thousand pages of notes left by House belatedly reveal the frantic activities of the pro-war lobby. All the notes involve the year 1915. "My opinion has not changed: the conflict is inevitable." "We must act decisively." "I think to send more communications (to Germany) would be a mistake." (House) "Our hopes,our aspirations, our sympathy are closely bound to those of the democracies." (Page, U.S. Ammbassador in London) Another 1915 document reports a conversation between Wilson and Brand-Witlock, an American diplomat based in Brussels: -Brand-Witlock: "I do not accept our state of neutrality. I am on the side of the Allies with all my soul and mind." -Wilson: (loudly) "And so am I." However, Wilson would keep his feelings from being made public until after the next year's elections. Playing to the electorate he would, instead, say sanctimoniously: "I have no right to force the American people to participate in a war they do not understand." (House, II, 263)

House was back from London. His complicity with British foreign minister Grey was such that they had devised a secret code for their correspondence. Scores of letters and cables would bypass government channels, establishing a private line of communication between the foreign minister of a belligerent state and the president's advisor of a neutral one. One of these secret messages to Grey shows how at odds House was with real public opinion in the United States: "The nation continues to show itself clearly opposed to war and I seriously doubt that Congress would support the president if he decides otherwise." (July 8, 1915; House, II, 70) Yale Professor Charles Seymour describes what the American people felt during these months of intrigue: The blockade that the British had tightened at the beginning of summer had raised a storm of complaints from the American shippers. They loudly denounced Wilson and the State department for abjectly accommodating the British while neglecting American interests. They demanded reprisals (against the British)." (House, II, 82)

House conceded that the American public was not buying pro-war arguments: "Our quarrel with Germany does not stir much emotion in the West of the country or to the south of Ohio. That's three-fourths of the country." (House, II, 60) He added: "As for the rest of the country I noticed that it is the old men and sometimes women who are displaying bellicosity." United States senators also expressed their will not to tolerate British maritime blackmail: "The Senate demands that ever stronger pressure be put on England and its allies so that they can renounce their restrictions affecting neutral trade." Yet on August 4,

1915 House was writing to Ambassador Page and describing "his sadness" that "ninety percent of our nationals are opposing our going to war." (House, II, 74)

Allied propaganda directed at the American public was often favorably received, even though the stories were getting taller. For instance the United States ambassador in Berlin cabled: "The Kaiser is losing his mind, he spends his time praying and studying Hebrew." (House, II, 124) A note from Wilson himself informs us: "Northcliffe assured us last night that the kaiser is dying of throat cancer." Stories about blood-thirsty Huns resurfaced in the news. On August 26, 1915 House warned: "German agents will no doubt try to blow up hydroelectric plants, gas and electricity stations, subways and bridges in cities like New York."

House urged Wilson to exploit the Lusitania sinking to the point at which "the rupture with Germany became inevitable and the United States would be forced to enter the war on the side of the Allies." (House, II, 96) Secretly, he would submit to Grey a Machiavellian peace plan to be presented to the German government. The conditions were to be made unacceptable to ensure they would be rejected by the kaiser. The rejection would then enable the United States to join the Allies in order to save the peace. "It goes without saying," House explained to the British minister, "that I will not let the Germans know we are in agreement with the Allies, but I will attempt on the contrary to convince them they (the Allies) will reject our proposals. This could influence them in accepting them. If they did not, their refusal would be enough to justify our intervention." (House, II, 107) The message was as tortuous as the Talmud. Even Wilson thought the offer was too blatantly in favor of the Allies. When House conveyed to Grey that if "the Central powers still rejected our proposals we would be obliged to join the Allies" Wilson inserted the word "probably" between "would" and "be obliged." It looked more diplomatic. House shamelessly flattered Wilson to get his way. Whenever the president acted on House's advice House would write: "Never indeed has a more noble role fallen to a son of man." (House, II, 108.) Wilson's susceptability to such outrageous flattery was no small factor in his decision-making. It is a fact that Wilson hated Germans. Many documents attest to it. Other people dislike Americans, Arabs, Blacks or-crime of crimes-Jews. Wilson disliked Germans. That was no doubt his right, but it also made him particularly unsuitable to act as a referee.

Despite his aversion to them, Wilson did not mean deliberately to push the Germans into ruin. He did it because House, the brain of the operation, maneuvered him into the European war in 1917. The American diplomat William Bullitt wrote with some honesty: "House was Wilson's alter ego and he had decided to drag the American people into a war under the pretext of a humanitarian gesture, to help the Allies realize their aims." Wilson's erratic behavior between October 1915 and May 1916 can be attributed to House's deceitful actions. He always talked peace while actively promoting war. Wilson never saw through House because he was an average politician with a mediocre vision of the world. He regarded House's international meddling with admiration because it was all quite beyond him. House was always careful to make the president believe he (Wilson) had all the ideas. Sometimes, however, House overplayed his hand.

Wilson was very uneasy with Britain's violations of international law and attacks on neutral ships and really felt he had the duty to impose sanctions. It took all of House's flattering talent to coax the president back on the British path. All this anguished Wilson, because basically he would have rather had peace; he saw himself as a friend of mankind. Unfortunately, his mind was vapid, his will was weak. He did not rush into war, he was pushed into it. A domestic event also increased Wilson's inaction. A widower, he had suddenly fallen in love with a certain Edith Bolling Galt. The courtship absorbed him so much that he let House virtually do all his thinking. Says House himself: "He was madly in love, with the zeal of a sixty-year old who suddenly felt old." The president was no longer reading his correspondence, including Grey's communications. On December 18, 1915 the ailing president married Mrs. Galt. She would be, from now on, the only interest in Wilson's life and leave her own mark on the presidency, particularly after the war. Apart from marital bliss, Wilson was preoccupied with prophecy. He had vague notions of rallying all the world's people to a higher ethic. The Allies laughed at Wilson behind his back. They listened to his visions but only for the purpose of emptying America of its dollars when the time came. Wilson had the key to the cash box, so they endured his preaching.

House was determined to trap the Germans. He brought substantial support to the Allies and the ultimatums he engineered after the sinking of the Lusitania and the Arabic intimidated the Germans on the seas for months. The Allies greatly benefited, but showed little gratitude. Grey explained that whatever concessions Wilson extracted from the Germans, none were of any concern to the Entente. The British government never shared Wilson's quest for peace. For Lloyd George the war had become an excellent business and he was in no hurry to settle it. House described the British prime minister's satisfaction: "Because of the fact that people will have acquired better habits and young people will have been subjected to serious training, one will live longer. Productivity will be increased because the lazy will be forced to work and keep on working. The added workforce will add more than a billion dollars to the wealth of Great Britain. Further, people will lead a far simpler life and that should save millions of dollars." (House, II, 147) House added that Lloyd George had concluded his remarks: "War can go on indefinitely." Grey had so little interest in Wilson's peace plan that he saw fit not to talk about it to his allies. Professor Seymour remarked that Grey "was so convinced the Allies would reject the plan that he did not even discuss the possibility of accepting it. Grey made clear that the Allies would be suspicious of any conference." On November 25, 1915 House wrote: "The offer I brought with me and which was to secure the victory of the Allies deserved, it seems to me, to be more warmly received." (House, II, 145) The offer was thrown into the trash can. From Boulogne in France, House sent Wilson the last British offer: "It is understood that if the Allies make any significant progress during spring or summer, you should not intervene, but should the war turn to their disadvantage or become static, then you would come in." (Lloyd George proposal to Wilson; House, II, 187) The British perceived

American intervention as a stop gap in case of defeat, as did the French. House had promised the Allies he would not breathe a word to any one about the offer. He warned Wilson it was strictly private between himself and the allied leaders: "I have given my word that I would not talk about it to anyone in America, with the exception of Lansing and yourself." Thus, for the duration of the First World War, the American people had no inkling of the international shenanigans being acted out in their name, but against what they desired. Wilson was well aware of the people's strong neutrality: "I do not believe that the Americans want to get into the war, whatever number of our countrymen get torpedoed." (Bullitt, President Wilson, 282) Three men with the power to make war imposed their secret diplomacy on one hundred million Americans kept in complete ignorance.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Chapter 33

Wilson Wavers

Colonel House was convinced that "We are the only nation on earth to get them (the Allies) out of trouble." (House, II, 156) In 1918 it became evident: the Allies were saved from drowning by the United States, but in 1916 the French government shrugged its shoulders at the mention of American intervention. Yet Grey told House, Americans would risk being treated in Great Britain as "a negligible quantity." The Allies were certain of inflicting a phenomenal defeat on the kaiser by summer. Ambassador Page concurred with this expectation and warned Washington "of the necessity of imposing a crushing defeat without negotiations on the Germans and for the Allies to dictate any conditions they wanted." (House, II, 257) While waiting for such a wondrous outcome, House departed for Germany on January 20, 1916. His report to Wilson is rather depressing: "I must say before entering Germany through the Swiss border that everywhere I have gone I found in the governments the same obstinacy, the same selfishness and the same hypocrisy." (House, II, 188) Despite his pro-British bias he was rather dejected: "History will, I fear, severely judge the men who were selfish enough and had so little foresight to let such a tragedy happen." The gap between House's words and deeds left many perplexed. The German chancellor told him: "I do not understand why my voice remains without echo. I deplore war and its frightful consequences and I say loudly that my conscience cannot bear its responsibility." (House, II, 163) House recognized he had been well received in Germany when he returned to Paris on February 3, 1916. He also realized that the Germans were losing patience. The withdrawal of their submarines from combat duty under American pressure had cut off their supply lines and had exasperated the army and especially the navy. The blockade had deprived women and children of food. Millions of them went hungry and some died of starvation. House callously wrote that: "I find it fair war for the Entente to try to starve the Germans and reduce them to sue for peace." The British blockade was causing famine and it was now likely that the military would change this situation by returning to submarine warfare in the Atlantic and elsewhere. House was struck by the fighting spirit of the German high command.

On February 14, 1916 in London, House attended a dinner with Grey, Balfour, Lloyd George and Asquith. He gave them his impressions: "The Germans are at peak efficiency and they can strike a decisive blow, break through the lines and occupy Calais or Paris. If they do, it is possible that the war will end." At the same time the Allies were also rushing to breach the German lines. Neither side reached its objectives. They would slaughter each other by the hundreds of thousands. Lloyd George was unconcerned and stuck to his opinion that the war "could go on indefinitely." Verdun illustrated this policy: six hundred and fifty thousand died to gain ground the size of a football field, and then it was lost again. For two years, across an area four hundred miles wide, a war of attrition would wear on: a few feet would be won and then lost. Millions of men would die, powerless, in this slaughterhouse. Even Churchill, who had been responsible for the massacre of Gallipoli, would write later: "There is no more bloody war than a war of attrition. Future generations will find it incredible and horrible that such practices could have been imposed by the military." Churchill failed to mention, however, that Poincaré, Grey and House were not military men. House now firmly believe that only America could "pull Europe out of its terrible dead-end." In other words, America could add another mountain of dead to the other mountain of dead already blocking the horizon. House was ready to confront the Germans with his unacceptable plan. He was getting ready to explain, with a tearful eye, to the American people that he had tried everything and that war was the last recourse.

The Germans went out of their way to avoid war with the United States. They were fighting on the Russian front, in Serbia, in Romania, in Italy, on the Dardanelles, and in Asia Minor as well as on the entire breadth of the French front, and they had no wish to deal with another enemy. To keep the peace with the United States the German submarine fleet remained at its base at Heligoland. German captains were punished by their government for their mistakes. Large indemnities were paid even in such debatable cases as the Lusitania. In March 1916, eight allied vessels were sunk. Each carried American passengers but none of them lost their lives, thanks to German caution. Indifferent to German accommodation, House asked Wilson to break diplomatic relations with Germany and presented the president with a draft note to this effect. On April 11, 1916 House even cabled the United States Ambassador in Berlin to warn him about the possibility. On the same date the Germans once again informed Washington of their willingness to avoid all incidents at sea. On April 14, 1916 the Reich ambassador in Washington presented House with an official document-it is noteworthy that foreign diplomats went directly to House and not Wilson:

My dear Colonel House: My government is ready to conduct submarine warfare with all due respect to the rights of neutrals. It is standing by the assurances already provided to your government and it had given such precise instructions to its submarine commanders, that within the bounds of human foresight errors can no longer be committed. If, contrary to our intentions, some do occur our government is committed to correct them by all the means in its power.

The ambassador added that this assurance was given notwithstanding British

violations of international law and British use of American citizens to cover up their arms traffic. House convinced Wilson to issue a strongly worded answer to the conciliatory German offer. On April 18, 1916 House replied through the president: "Unless the Imperial government declares immediately that it will forthwith forsake its current methods of submarine warfare against passenger ships and freighters, the United States government has no other alternative than to break diplomatic relations with the German Empire." House openly bragged he had forced the president's hand: "I called on my best means of persuasion to keep him in a state of mind impervious to any compromise." Would House succeed in breaking relations? The Germans would not oblige him. They announced that submarine commanders had been sent new instructions and they would be "ready to do their utmost in keeping military operations, during the entire war, strictly within combat areas." The concessions were humiliating for Germany but the United States government was also asked to exercise its neutrality and be watchful that "all belligerent powers adhere to principles of humanity." If the United States government declined "Germany would then face a new situation and would be absolutely free to act accordingly." (House, II, 271) The American people were kept in the dark about the whole affair and no newspapers ever mentioned any of the real concessions made by Germany. Wilson was perplexed and asked House what he thought of the German answer. House admitted that since Germany had accepted the American conditions "there was no valid excuse to break diplomatic relations with Berlin." (House, II, 272) House used the word excuse rather than motive or reason.

On March 10, 1916 House, using the code the British government had devised for his exclusive use, cabled Sir Edward Grey: "If you deem it useful I will renew our offers by cable every two weeks. Let me know, if you please, whether I should act this way or on the contrary wait until you signal me. Be assured, my dear friend, that I think of you all the time and that I would like somehow to lighten the burden weighing so heavily on your shoulders." Thus Grey was kept informed by House about everything. On May 27, 1916 Grey was told on the same day the terms of a new German offer. The document is of great importance: "Dear Sir Edward, I want to attract your attention to one thing: the German chancellor declares that Germany would accept a peace based on the borders of states as they exist today on the maps." (House, II, 321) It was the end of May and Germany was victorious on both the Western and Eastern fronts. Yet it was willing to give up the gains its army had won to that point. The Allies would not hear of it. Jesserand, the French ambassador in Washington, reacted immediately: "France will not accept under any circumstances listening to plans which include the word peace." (House, II, 322) Grey wrote to House endorsing this fanatical reaction: "No Englishmen will tell France at this stage: Don't you think it's time to make peace?" The Allies interpreted Germany's desire for peace as a sign of weakness and were all the more determined to press on with a war of attrition. Their greatest fear at this stage was Germany's acceptance of the American peace plan. At the time any American input was seen as interference. House was aware of the Euorpean view when he wrote:

"American patricipation (in the conflict) could become embarrassing for the Allies if it touched on the secret treaties which Wilson knows nothing about." (House, II, 323) The British wanted American dollars and American soldiers but rejected Wilson's sermonizing about land grabs and colonialism. Wilson, as obtuse as he was, had finally awakened to the schemes of the allies. "He suspected," wrote Seymour, "certain Allies of pursuing selfish plans and he was not as convinced as his friend House of the necessity of taking sides with them." His reservations were such that at the end of 1916 American policy could appear to have turned against the Allies.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Chapter 34

"He Kept Us Out of War."

The withdrawal of German submarines proved counter-productive for the Allies. The fewer ships that were sunk the less America was likely to weigh in for the British. American ships had to be sunk and American indignation had to be raised. For this purpose the British needed the German submarines back in action. House was designated for this mission of provocation. On November 17, 1916, a few days after the elections, he would write: "If we have to go to war let it be against Germany." Yet a number of events were still to thwart the British lobby in America. The mail scandal particularly angered Wilson. The British had gotten into the habit of seizing American mail on United States ships they searched. British inspectors had control of all American correspondence for whatever purpose they chose. House quotes Wilson: "The way this thing is going I think solid retaliation is the only way to deter them." (House, II, 354) The China incident was the last straw. The British boarded the U.S. ship China by force, seized the mail and began to interrogate the American passengers, who were then taken off the ship as prisoners. It was piracy at its worst. House was embarrassed and had to write to his British friends: "I cannot conceive that the British could have taken fifty people off the American vessel China." Sir Edward Grey harshly dismissed House's lament. House wrote: "Sir Edward could hardly invent anything that would more surely cool the ardently pro-British sentiments of Americans such as myself." (House, II, 341) Seymour wrote: "Mr. Wilson was extremely troubled by the Allies' attitude, particularly when Germany, which had submitted to the president on the submarine dispute, was not giving him any problems at the moment." House did not hide his apprehension: "It is starting to get on the President's nerves. From now on his suspicions of Allied motivations will only deepen." (House, II, 339) The British practice of blacklisting also angered American opinion. "On July 18, 1916 the Government of the United Kingdom published a list of more than eighty American corporations with which it was forbidden to trade because they had commercial relations with an enemy of the Allies. The number of blacklisted companies has now risen to fifteen hundred." (House, II, 348) Thus, fifteen hundred American

companies were cut off from credit, supplies, and trade. One wonders what would have happened if Germany had committed the tenth of such an action! Professor Seymour explains the boycott: "British shipping companies were advised not to accept freight from the proscribed firms. Companies of neutral countries were given to understand that if they took freight from the blacklisted American firms they too would run the risk of seeing their freight rejected in British ports. Bankers of such countries would no longer finance blacklisted traders." On July 22, 1916 adviser Polk wrote to House: "The blacklist just published by the British government is creating considerable irritation; something will have to be done." The next day Wilson lost patience and House was asked to recall Ambassador Page from London. House was grasping for excuses: "They are perhaps imprudent in their methods, blinded by their interests or their immediate needs"; adding, "The Allied attitude results for the most part in that they do not realize they have a kind of instinctive feeling for considering the high seas as inalienable British property."

Thus the British-American conflict worsened from week to week. American public opinion demanded countermeasures. Congress had also lost patience: In September 1916 President Wilson was given special powers authorizing him "to take, if necessary, violent means of reprisal." British Ambassador Cecil haughtily replied: "If you attempt to put these measures into effect, it would result no doubt in the breaking of diplomatic relations and the end of all trade between the two countries." (House, II, 357) The State Department reported: "Our relations with Great Britain are worsening," while Wilson complained privately that "the Allies are exasperating beyond description." People wondered whether the threat of an American intervention would be diverted from Germany and against the United Kingdom.

By the end of 1916 this threat became quite real. The United States government was prompted to act. A decision was taken that would change the British role forever. The United States would no longer tolerate British rule over the seas of the world, British dictatorship over neutral countries, British seizure of mail, kidnapping of American passengers and blacklisting of American companies. The United States took the historic step of building one hundred and thirty-seven new ships. Shortly, the British navy was facing an American fleet of equal might, which would soon grow mightier. Britannia's pretension to rule the waves had decreed that Germany would be prohibited from expanding its maritime trade. Britain had started a war to prevent such a possibility. The British claim of dominion over the seas was now being challenged and swept away by Britain's keenest trading partner. The British monopoly might be broken at last. Other countries, including Japan, would eventually outstrip the British. Wilson was as determined as Congress: "Let us build a stronger navy than theirs and let us act as we see fit." (House, II, 353) The British had practiced too much perfidy and hypocrisy for their own good; they had shot themselves in the foot. In 1916 Congress struck a fatal blow at arrogant British imperialism.

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American public opinion against the British was also reinforced by the testimony of millions of Irish-Americans who had fled the ruthless colonization of their native land by Britain. Their forebearers had been slaughtered and persecuted for centuries by the British and more recently they had vividly felt the bloody massacre of Irish patriots during Easter, 1916. The British had put down the quest of Irish independence with more savagery than it had massacred Zulus in Africa. The inhuman treatment traditionally reserved for Irish prisoners in British jails triggered widespread indignation in the United States: "American sympathy went without question to the Irish prisoners, who were very harshly treated. This was objectively reflected in a Senate resolution." (House, II, 353) Sir Edward Grey sent House on August 28, 1916 a stern reprimand: "The attitude of the Senate, voting for a motion in favor of Irish soldiers without worrying about atrocities committed in Belgium, caused us a painful impression." House abjectly disowned the United States' motion and even apologized to the British: "... it surpasses the record of blind acts committed by my unfortunate country." The British reference to Belgium particularly angered Americans. State Secretary Lansing replied at once: "... the hypocritical language of the British as far as Belgium is concerned fills us with indignation." (House, II, 355.) Even the pro-British Page conceded: ". . . the British would have fought alongside the French even if the French government had violated Belgium's neutrality to reach German soil more efficiently." The question now was whether the United States would cut off aid to the Allies.

1916 was a very bad year for the Allies. The British were losing everywhere. Even the vaunted Royal Navy lost a major sea battle off Jutland, on May 31, 1916, despite the fact it outnumbered the German force two to one. Their losses were double those of Germany, despite the fact that a British spy ring had informed their admiralty of German Admiral von Scheer's plans for breaking the blockade. Von Scheer had no wish to fight it out with the bulk of the Royal Navy and had planned to lure a number of British cruisers close to Norwegian coast. Since his plans had become known, he had to face the entire Royal Navy. The clash was hard fought and Germany lost six ships and 2551 sailors; the British lost twelve ships and 6094 sailors. British pride was hurt by facing a better naval force, with better crews, better commanders and more accurate firepower. The British, galled by their defeat, switched their attention to the propaganda front with rancorous vengeance. The British claimed that a German submarine, the U-53, had torpedoed six Allied vessels near the American coastline. An official inquiry confirmed the U-53 had sunk six vessels, but "well outside United States territorial waters." Professor Seymour also agreed: "The U-53 actions were strictly within the norms of maritime war usage." The British hardly conformed to this usage. German ambassador Bernstorff pointed out that British submarines sank German freighters without warning and without regard for human lives every day of the week. Once more an anti-German campaign in the United States had failed miserably.

Despite famine and provocation the Germans stuck to their policy of not giving House an excuse to push America into the war. The price was heavy. The

blockade was starving civilians while the British were shipping millions of tons of arms without fear of German attack. Kaiser Wilhelm had ordered the policy because he believed his moderation would lead to peace. The German policy of moderation lasted throughout 1916, British propaganda notwithstanding, as indicated by State Department reports: "German submarine warfare was conducted according to maritime law." This report appears in the House private papers. The Kaiser's policy, however, was being increasingly criticized in Germany. The principal argument put forward against the chancellor was that he gave in to the United States although he knew very well the American government did not act as a neutral: it put pressure only on Germany while allowing Britain to break international law Germany ambassador Bernstorff officially warned President Wilson as early as October 18, 1916 that Germany could no longer sacrifice its national interest: "The German government foresees the time when it will be forced to take back its freedom of action." (House, II, 374) Wilson was full of misgivings: "If we send Bernstorff back and go to war, we will be covered with flowers for a few weeks; then calls will be made on our money. The money we give will not last long and then there will be demands for an unlimited number of soldiers. Admitting that we subscribe to all their (the Allies) demands." Wilson's comments were quite prophetic. A few months later he would see his worst fears realized. House was very concerned over Wilson's frame of mind at the time. Congress demanded sanctions against the British government. House could clearly see the day where both Wilson and Congress would decide to stop the flow of goods and money to the Allies. As the November election grew near, House was faced with a 90 percent non-interventionist electorate. Even when his infatuation with British pomp and his allegiance to the British Establishment impelled him to promote war, he was forced by political realities to appear pro-American. Likewise, Wilson had to set aside his secret hatred of the Germans, as well as House's machinations, if he wanted to win the election. He presented himself as the peace candidate who would defend American neutrality at any cost. Yet his peace promises did not sway the electorate which wanted more tangible proof. It became a matter of hiding any pro-Allied leanings and convincing the voters that the administration was more than 100 percent for peace and neutrality.

Wilson never tired of referring to the Allies' war as a complex mystery: "The origin of this peculiar war or its objectives have never been revealed .. . history will have to search a long time to explain this conflict." (Bullitt, President Wilson, 280) Such statements made it difficult for the American voters to imagine that their author would throw them into a foreign war-one he himself admitted he could not understand. In July 1916 Wilson received the Democratic nomination for president. His campaign slogan was built around the theme: "He had kept us out of war, he has maintained our neutrality."

As Bullitt pointed out, however, "Wilson, knowing he had been trying for the last eight months to drag Americans into the war, had such a bad conscience about it that he avoided during all his campaign speeches any mention of having maintained neutrality in the past." This notion was left to others, such as Gov-

ernor Glynn of New York, to propagate. Thousands of posters and leaflets were distributed in every American town, particularly in the West, where anti-war sentiment ran stronger. "He has maintained America's neutrality" became the Democratic party slogan. The massive propaganda blitz made Wilson synonymous with peace and neutrality. Bullitt added: "If the American people had known he was trying to get them into war he would have experienced a crushing defeat."

Wilson remained aloof throughout the campaign. "The President has left everything in our hands. He has not phoned, made the slightest suggestion or given any advice," said House. House was thus empowered to run a pro-neutralist campaign as he saw fit. He was determined to sabotage this policy as soon as the elections were over. He would find a way to drive the Germans into some act of desperation, which he hoped would reverse neutrality. House had by then become a master of ruse and subterfuge and felt quite confident his talents could be used to influence events: "One can always rely on the Germans to commit some psychological mistakes at the critical moment." For House the campaign was just another necessary duplicity. The American people were being duped on a massive scale. House in his role as standard bearer of neutrality would say or promise anything to secure Wilson's re-election, which in fact would guarantee his own tenure in the seat of power. With another term up his sleeve, everything would be possible for House.

Thus, on November 7, 1916 Wilson was re-elected president of the United States. But the results showed that House had not fooled all the people. Wilson was elected by a small margin. For a while it looked as if he had lost. The New York Times even announced his Republican opponent the victor. Later, a victory celebration was organized for Wilson, but it was more like a funeral. House declined to attend because he did not want to be associated with defeat. "Lansing and McCormick went and they told me they had never been to such a mournful event." (House, II, 282) Finally, after four days of hope and despair, Wilson emerged as the winner by a head. "He owed his election to the ambiguous votes of the Western States, all in crushing majority against the war" (House, II, 282). Wilson's inaugural speech still reflected his campaign promises: "I formally declare that the time has come for the United States to play an active role in establishing peace in the world and ensuring its continuance. I solemnly undertake to keep my country out of war." (House, II, 422, 428) Wilson appeared to be genuinely impressed by the strength of anti- interventionist sentiment in America. Back in the White House he clearly, for a few weeks at least, respected the popular will. When House tried to broach the subject of America's participation in the war for the first time, Wilson stood up to his alter ego. Sigmund Freud and Bullitt called it Wilson's last stand: When on January 4, 1917 House pressured him to prepare for war, Wilson replied: There will be no war; the country has no intention whatsoever to let itself be dragged into this conflict. We are the only neutrals among the great peoples of the white race and to cease being neutral would be a crime against civilization. (House, II, 288) Four months later House and the Allies would be swamping Wilson and

the "crime against civilization" would start to take shape.

Chapter 35

A Home for the Jews

Rarely had voters indicated so clearly to an elected official why they had given him their votes. The neutrality issue crossed party lines. The Republican platform had demanded that Wilson guarantee neutrality. After several months of standing firm, Wilson was gradually being softened up by the relentless House. House regarded neutrality as a strategem to enter war and Wilson was a horse to be ridden into battle. "The President," said House with some arrogance, "can modify his views. As I have said before, he often and easily changes his mind." The contrast between Wilson and House over neutrality was uneven. Wilson was rather honest but his mind was like a wet sponge, easily manipulated. House, the honorary Texas colonel, was power hungry and deceitful. He knew the American people would never have elected him and he made it his business to pull all the strings behind the scenes, behind Wilson. Wilson tried to respect his election commitment but House never let up. The tug of war would go on for months, like the plot of some detective novel.

* * *

Wilson was disappointed with the Allies: they did not want peace, they had imperialist designs, they did not share his vision for a better world. He had reached the conclusion that neither the Germans, whom he did not like, nor the Allies, whom he distrusted, were worth a war. America would not join the massacre for their sake. House, on the other hand, was committed to British interests and was committed to deliver America to fight a British war. Wilson and House were no longer of one mind or one another's alter ego. In fact, House set out to undermine Wilson's moves for peace: "I did all I could to stop Wilson from launching another peace offensive without first having received the Allies' consent." (Letter to Seymour). House later commented that Wilson's peace proposals were "offending the Allies." (House, II, 431) Rebuffed by the Allies, Wilson now wanted to reach European public opinion directly and create

popular peace movements among all the belligerents. House immediately told Wilson: "The Allies would interpret such a project as inimical." Wilson did not want to appear hostile, so he dropped his plan. Instead, he asked House to go to Europe once more. House said no: "It would take too much time and I would have to struggle with all sorts of unfavorable arguments. None of them could ignore that I was there to talk peace and I would rather go to the kingdom of hell than visit these countries with such a mission." (House, II, 433) Wilson was somewhat taken aback. His alter ego preferred hell to peace. When Wilson stated that the matter of submarine warfare and its attendant international laws should be settled without any further delay House replied he could see no reason "to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for Germany." Wilson decided to send a message to all the countries at war as well as the American people. He wrote it himself and showed it to House who immediately was critical of its content: "I dread the reaction it will provoke. The phrase 'the causes and objectives of this war are obscure' raises strong objections." In his secret notes House complained: "Each time he (Wilson) talks about the war he offends the Allies." (House, II, 436) The "offending" phrase was nevertheless correct. The war had been prepared in secrecy, with lies and provocations. Its aims and objectives had been carefully obscured by the schemers who had set it in motion. Perhaps without realizing it, Wilson was directing the spotlight on a crime. House could not countenance such a suggestion and put on a performance for a change of phraseology: "I begged him (Wilson) to modify the text I criticized and to replace it with something which would allow the Allies to believe the president sympathized with them." (House, II, 437) House wanted the president to perform a kind of dialectical somersault: his quest for peace had somehow to convey to the Allies that he really did not want it. "I suggested the insertion of a clause specifying he did not have the pretension to interfere or demand peace." Jusserand, the French Ambassador in Washington, also spoke for the British when he stated: "The Western front is in all likelihood condemned to stagnate for at least a year and perhaps more." It was a war of attrition which the British were in no hurry to stop, while the thousand-year-old fabric of European civilization was being torn apart.

The outcome of the differences between House and Wilson would be profoundly affected by the intervention of certain Jewish personalities, as well as by Lloyd George, an ardent war advocate. Lloyd George's first announcement was of "a policy based on the knock-out principle, which would exclude any possibility of negotiations with Germany" (House, II, 440). This was the same Lloyd George who less than twenty years later would go to Berchtesgaden to salute with warmth and admiration the new chancellor of Germany, Adolf Hitler. Sir Edward Grey was also replaced by the Jewish peer, Lord Balfour, while another Jew, Sonnino, had been made foreign minister of Italy. In the United States, Jewish financier Bernard Baruch had enlarged his influence within the administration. French premier Georges Clemenceau's equivalent of House was the Jew Georges Mandel, known legally as Jeroboam Rothschild, and his financial adviser was another Jew called Klotz, who was appointed finance minister of

France. (Years later Klotz would end up in jail as a convicted swindler.) House was delighted with all the changes. Balfour would make it his personal business to change American public opinion. In 1916 he came to the United States to lay the groundwork among financial and press circles. In 1917 he made his famous Balfour Declaration, which was to bring about one of the greatest revolutions in the world. The Declaration appeared quite innocuous: it granted to the Jews of the world a "home" in Palestine. The Jews would not interfere with the existing inhabitiants of Palestine, the Palestinians. The Palestinian way of life and property would be respected and there was not the slightest hint of expanding the "home for the Jews" at the expense of the Palestinians. Balfour's plan raised concern in many countries: it created a precedent for other peoples to claim a home in a land they may have inhabited as far back as two thousand years ago. The precedent would open the door for many to claim land they had lived in far more recently. Balfour was quick to put the lid on the whole issue with the help of Jewish-controlled newspapers and international news agencies. He reasoned that issues are raised by the press, not people, and if the press did not debate his plan no one would question it. Those who did were never reported. Balfour believed in the sacred duty of the press to manipulate the many for the benefit of the few. He chose America to implement this policy.

At the beginning of the war the majority of Jews had been favorable to Germany. Tsarist Russia, their mortal enemy, had been attacked by Germany, and the Kaiser was looked upon as the man who would deliver Palestine as a home for the Jews. Although there had been occasional violent reactions against them, it was in Germany they felt most at ease. They had acquired enormous influence in finance and business, in the news media and the universities. They regarded their own language of Yiddish as akin to German and they liked to be involved in German culture. Kaiser Wilhelm treated them with deference. The richest man in Germany was a Jew named Albert Ballin, who was an adviser to the Kaiser; the most influential members of the Reichstag were Jews. British Jews thought highly of the Kaiser: Lord Rothschild sent a cable wishing the Kaiser well when the war broke out. American Jews were just as favorable to Germany, as the war coverage of the Jewish-controlled press in 1914 and 1915 will testify. When Balfour came to the United States in 1916, he was amazed at the strength of the Jewish lobby and Jewish influence in finance, politics and the press. Balfour was satisfied the Jews could direct the country in any way they pleased. It was his task to harness and direct this tremendous power for the benefit of his British associates. Certain events had made a reorientation of Jewish loyalties necessary. By 1917, Tsarist Russia had been destroyed and it looked as if the Kaiser's Turkish allies would prevent him from delivering Palestine to the Jews. As far as Balfour was concerned Germany had outlived its usefulness and any Jewish loyalty to it was totally out of date. The British were now to hand over Palestine after Balfour and House helped them win the war by bringing America to their side. It was a simple deal: the Jews would bring America into the war, thus ensuring a British victory. For this service Great Britain would make Palestine "a home for the Jews." Balfour had yet to

convince American Jewry. He had to make them change sides almost overnight. The most eloquent and persuasive advocates of Zionism were enlisted to tell American Jews that their dream of a return to Jerusalem was about to be realized after two thousand long years. It was an emotional appeal designed to bring American Jewry to the side of the Entente. Balfour and his agents were successful beyond all expectation. American Jewry switched over to the side of the Allies in 1917. Jewish financial and press networks were now placed at the disposal of the Allied war effort. After the war, Balfour explained his promises were only in his mind: just so many propaganda slogans to promote whatever he was trying to do at the time. The Jews he had convinced did not see them that way. The Balfour Declaration was a time bomb bringing war and destruction throughout the course of the twentieth century.

* * *

The British government was informed by House of the Wilson administration's every move. House, backed by the full power of American Jewry, was in virtual control of America. In turn the British were in control of House. He took his orders from London and acted as a kind of unofficial British viceroy of the United States. The new order left Wilson weaker and more isolated than ever. He had become withdrawn and no longer made any attempt to confer with House on the subject of peace. In the eyes of the new power brokers President Wilson was just a figurehead and was treated as such. This development greatly concerned the Germans. On December 12, 1916 the German government declared itself ready to talk peace with all of its adversaries. The Germans were hoping Wilson, now that he was taken at his word, could somehow influence the Allies to sit down at the peace table. They soon found out the president was in no position to wield such influence. The British Establishment had sent a high level agent, Sir William Wiseman, to Washington. His job was to instruct House of London's requirements. The German peace call got short shrift. Wiseman informed House: "It is impossible to negotiate with the Germans since they did not specify any conditions." The British answer was quite dishonest since "conditions" are discussed at the negotiating table, not before. Again, the president was left out by the British, who communicated with House as the unofficial head of state of America. -In London, U.S. Ambassador Page immediately informed the British government that Wilson was not in the least interested in the German peace call. It was an outright lie which Seymour deplored: "Mr. Page has so little sympathy with Mr. Wilson's policy that he gave the British to understand the American administration would not take the German appeal seriously." (House, II, 445) In fact, Wilson wrote a note all by himself and for the first time in his life did not show it to House. He appealed to both the Allies and Germany to exchange views: "The belligerents each insist on certain conditions. They are not incompatible, contrary to the fear of certain persons. An exchange of views would clear the air." This was exactly what the Germans wanted and the Allies rejected. When House read the note after it had been sent, he moaned: "These words will enrage the Allies." He formally disassociated himself with the entire content of Wilson's note because "the Allies were obviously not in a mood to

welcome it." The statement indicated that House was more concerned with the Allies' mood than the interests of America. The Germans answered Wilson at once: "A direct exchange of views was the best way to reach peace. Germany renews its call for a conference." (House, II, 449) The Allies would come to a conference only if the Germans were defeated and chained: this was the gist of their reply to Wilson.

Both Wilson and Germany had failed in all their peace initiatives. There was no longer any reason for the Germans to restrain their submarines. The people were about to revolt. They could no longer endure the famine and demanded the breaking of the British blockade. Already more than one hundred thousand workers had gone on strike in Berlin, closing down strategic factories. One third of German deputies were socialists opposed to the military. As in St. Petersburg, they called on the people to revolt. Germany was faced with choosing between famine and revolution on one hand, or hurting the feelings of American officials on the other. Wilson's secretary of state, Lansing, was aware of Germany's dilemma when he concluded on December 21, 1916: "We are on the eve of war." House and the British lobby were concerned that Wilson might still thwart their war plans. House sounded the alarm in a number of notes: "X is very concerned ... he believes Wilson wants peace at any price" (January 2, 1917). "Y is quite downcast. According to him the president has lost his nerve" (January 4, 1917). House's fears were realized on January 22, 1917, when Wilson addressed the Senate: "We must reach a peace without victory. Peace must be based on the right of each nation to decide its own destiny without the intervention of a more powerful external enemy." The speech reflected American public opinion but profoundly upset Britain. Herbert Hoover, although he was anti-German, backed the president: "Wilson expressed what many people thought and waited for someone with the courage to proclaim." The future American president then asked Wilson: "The next step is to ask all belligerents whether they accept the principles expressed in your speech. If they don't, what are their objections? If they agree it will be fitting for you to convoke them in a conference." Wiseman, Balfour's liaison man with House in Washington, conveyed the British reaction: "By insisting too much on peace among the Allies you [the Americans] are doing great harm to the cause of democracy" (House, II, 465). "Deep resentment against Wilson," wrote House. "The Allied press keeps refering to his unfortunate mention of 'peace without victory.' Everybody sees a contradiction on our part in wanting Germany to escape punishment." House never stopped agitating for war. On January 25, 1917 he urged Wilson: "If I were you I would be cautious enough to hasten the state of readiness of the navy and the army." On January 30, after the Allied failure to answer Wilson's last peace call, the German ambassador announced that Germany had now decided to break the British blockade regardless of American reaction. The German forces were in good position on both East and Western fronts. Russia, attacked from within and without, was about to collapse. This meant a million German soldiers could be brought back to the Western front. Further, the defeated Russia would supply Germany with all the wheat and meat it wanted,

which in those days Russia had in abundance.

The German government hoped to offset the impact of the British blockade and perhaps ward off an American intervention. Unfortunately for Germany, tsarist Russia would stagger on for another two months. Manifests of German ships were published in order to warn American travelers of potential dangers, in still another attempt to avoid American involvement. The British did not reciprocate but instead increased their acts of piracy. Wilson was appalled: "I feel as if the planet is suddenly rotating the other way, after going from East to West it is now going from West to East. I have lost my balance."

The Kaiser left the door open for a reversal of the submarine decision if the president "succeeded in laying acceptable grounds for peace." He also promised to "safeguard American interests to the best of his ability." Wilson countered by reaffirming: "We do not wish to help selfish aims," which seemed more directed against the Allies than Germany. House kept a close watch on Wilson: "He [the president] moved his books around the desk nervously, he walked up and down the room ... We were painfully killing time, there was nothing left to say. Finally the president suggested we play billiards." House and the British lobby intensified their pressure on Wilson to break for diplomatic relations with Germany. After agonizing for three days, Wilson finally yielded and agreed to inform Congress that relations were now broken with the Reich. Even then Wilson still clung to rays of hope: "The president still refused to admit that a diplomatic break automatically means war." For House and his associates it most definitely meant war: "The break in diplomatic relations will lead to war ipso facto:' (House, II, 484) Wilson was very ill at ease. He feared public reaction. Industrialist Henry Ford had told him: "I have not met, between New York and San Francisco, a single man who wanted war." Although the German ambassador was officially expelled, Wilson allowed him to stay another two weeks. He was still in Washington when the Swiss ambassador, representing German interests, entered negotiations to "re-establish relations between Washington and Berlin." House was alarmed: "High officials at State fear Wilson might weaken." The return of German submarines, however, staved off House's anxiety. It was the only thing that would change American opinion.

If the Germans were to succeed they had to hit hard and win the sea war quickly within six months. They had worked out that their hundred and fifty submarines would sink three million tons of shipping during that period, one third of the British merchant navy. This would also frighten neutral countries away from exporting goods to Britain. Exports of wool from Australia, cotton from America and wheat from Canada and Argentina would be stopped. American intervention would come too late to save London. The submarines resumed combat duty on February 1, 1917. By the end of the month five hundred and forty thousand tons of British vessels had been sunk. By April the figure would reach eight hundred and seventy-four thousand tons. The French historian Renouvin wrote:

It is estimated that a steamship on the Gibraltar-London route would have one

chance in four of not making it home. Great Britain is therefore in the process of losing at an alarming rate its best merchant ships, those bringing wheat from Canada and Australia, raw material from the United States and meat from South America.

The German plan had succeeded beyond expectations. Britain was losing on land and sea. The British Admiralty brass was running scared: "If the losses incurred during the second week of April continue at the same level in the following weeks, it will be impossible to ensure the supplies of the British isles. Britain might be forced to capitulate." (Renouvin, La Crise européenne, 441) General Robertson, Chief of the British General Staff, informed Field Marshal Haig on April 26, 1917: "The maritime situation has never been worse than now. Jellicoe [commanding officer of the British navy] says almost daily things are desperate."

The tsar of Russia was overthrown on March 15, 1917. The British were massacred in the battle of Artois on April 6 and the French experienced a similar fate in Champagne on April 16. The Allies were reeling. "Admiral Holtzendorff's promise in January to bring Great Britain to heel before the end of August is about to be realized." (Renouvin, La Crise européenne, 411) The German navy gave the British a taste of their own medicine. They did not like it, and like the proverbial bully cried foul. The American press was now all ears to British wailing and waxed emotional over British-American kinship. The pro-British interventionists got a tremendous boost when big business weighed in on their side. American exports to Britain came to a grinding halt. The arms merchants, the cotton and wheat traders could no longer transport their wares. They were hit in the pocketbook. Overnight Germany became the enemy, regardless of the rights and wrongs of the conflict. Professor Renouvin states: "Britain and its allies accounted for three quarters of American exports. Within days American ports were piled with goods which ships were no longer loading. The resulting losses were not only hurting the arms manufacturers and big business on the East Coast, but industries in Ohio, Midwestern farmers, and cotton growers in the South." The whole nation felt the pinch and many minds were changed. Germany was to blame; German submarines had become intolerable.

In the same way, the banks joined the pro-war side. They had lent billions of dollars to the Allies-nineteen times more than they had lent to Germany-and they lived in dread of a German victory. Who would repay the multi-billion dollar loans if the Allies were defeated? For the bankers it was imperative that their debtors win. The Balfour Declaration had influenced the American press to switch to a pro-war policy. Many publishers were Jews and the Allies' war now became their war for Jerusalem. They felt Jerusalem was well worth a war; America owed it to them. Wilson was just at the end of his tether. He was besieged by all the interests fanning the flames of war. He was stigmatized for being "humiliated by German submarines" and "betraying national honor." The pro-war coalition was now moving to force the president's hand. On February 7 the State Department told the arms dealers to defend themselves by any useful means. Wilson was pressured to endorse in Congress a demand giving

him "the power to arm merchant vessels." Such vessels would force German submarines to attack or be sunk, as soon as they appeared. After four days of debate the House approved the motion. The Senate resisted for another ten days as twelve senators highly critical of the motion filibustered. Wilson accused the senators of reducing "the great government of the United States to ridiculous impotence." Since he could not obtain confirmation in the Senate, Wilson issued a presidential decree authorizing the conversion of merchant ships into de facto warships. As expected, a number of American ships were torpedoed, among them the Algonquin and the Viligentia. Yet even after these sinkings the American people, as distinct from the pro-war special interest groups, did not let themselves be carried away. House complained bitterly: "In Missouri they don't seem to understand what's at stake. That's the pathetic side of this business." House found it incomprehensible and "pathetic" that middle America would not rush enthusiastically into a blaze of bullets, bombs, and shells. The pro-war coalition created a way to turn the American people-those who had to do the fighting-into determined foes of the Germans. The sure-fire plan was known as the "Zimmerman telegram" affair.

Chapter 36

The “Zimmerman Telegram”

No one has ever understood very well what took place in the United States at the time of the "Zimmerman telegram" affair, except that it was responsible for turning the American people in favor of war. It was said at the time that Germany had proposed an alliance with Mexico. For the Europeans of 1917, Mexico was a little bit like Papua: they knew very little about it. They had a vague notion of bandits, sombreros, and cactus. Few people had any knowledge of Mexico's culture or its history. The Americans, on the other hand, had a far greater awareness of Mexico. Mexico had lost half its territory to the United States. Mexicans still grieved in 1917 for the relatively recent loss of Texas, California, Nevada, Arizona and parts of Wyoming and Colorado. To them it was not only their land but their Hispanic heritage that had been taken away. For centuries San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Salinas, Sacramento, Albuquerque, Pueblo, Alamogordo, El Paso, San Antonio, Amarillo were wonderful names that had been a part of them and very much remained in their patriotic consciousness. Americans, however, were now living in the former Hispanic provinces and did not take kindly to anything resembling a Mexican claim. There was fear and resentment on both sides of the border.

There was renewed resentment when the United States navy occupied the Mexican port of Vera Cruz and General Pershing led an army into Mexican territory. In those days it did not take much to bring in the U.S. gunboats. At the slightest sign of unrest, American troops were sent to "restore order." After 1900 the United States invaded Nicaragua, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and in 1916, Mexico. Without too much worry about "the rights of self-determination," the Wilson administration presided over the invasion of Haiti in 1915, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua in 1916. Just as Louisiana and Alaska had been purchased earlier, the administration bought the Virgin Islands from Denmark. It is not an act of Yankee-baiting to recall such imperialism but rather a matter of stating historical facts. Professor Bowan, director of the American Geographical Society, made the point candidly: "Since the an-

nexation of the Hawaiian Islands the United States have spread their influence and control over new territories faster than any other power including imperial Russia. From 1908 to 1917 there were eleven annexations, protectorates, purchases extending over half million square miles. It was impressive." The United States, like all other great powers, had not forged their unity by handing out candy to their neighbors. They had used force, even on their own citizens in the Southern states. The Indians had been forcibly removed from their tribal lands, until they no longer were a factor. While President Wilson talked of freedom of the seas and the rights of self-determination to the people of Europe, he refrained from dwelling on that subject on the home front. In 1917 the United States invaded Mexican territory and there was little debate on human rights.

As for the Germans, who felt the United States might attack them at any moment, it is possible they might have had some interest in allying themselves with Mexico. They had seen France seek an alliance with Russia against their country. They had seen the British turn to Japan in 1914 and urge the Japanese to declare war on Germany. It is therefore conceivable that Germany wished to keep American troops on the Mexican border. A conflict would have diverted American troops and resources away from Europe. German interests and Mexican nostalgia for its lost provinces could provide the basis of a Mexican-German alliance against a British-American coalition. As to whether such a Mexican-German alliance was ever consummated, the answer is negative. No treaty was ever signed at any time. It may have been considered, but even that is conjectural. The possibility was based solely on the content of the "Zimmerman telegram," of which the dispatch and interception have remained clouded with mystery to this day. The exploitation of this dubious document shook America to its foundation. The Allies had finally hit the jackpot, the break House had worked and waited for so long. The "Zimmerman telegram" burst out of shadows of intrigue. In February 1917, one of House's men, Frank Polk, telephoned his boss: "The British Admiralty has intercepted and decoded a sensational telegram sent by the German foreign minister to his ambassador in Mexico, Herr Eckhardt." He did not know the content but believed it was to the effect that Eckhardt had been instructed to conclude a German-Mexican alliance whereby Germany would help Mexico recover Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. The phone call was very strange. There was confusion as to the source of the information, which to this day has not been cleared up. First, the British Admiralty was supposed to have intercepted the telegram, then followed a second version, and a third and a fourth version, all contradicting each other. Professor Seymour examined the event: "A messenger carrying the telegram had been apprehended by our border patrol near the Mexican border ... We [U.S. intelligence operatives] made a copy of the dispatch sent to Halifax among Bernstorff's papers... The dispatch was hidden in a mysterious trunk which the British seized." These different versions were floating around Washington when House added yet another variant: he had not been informed by Polk but by Blinker Hall, chief of British naval intelligence. "It was Blinker Hall who pulled off this coup. He decoded the telegram and sent it to us." (House, II,

498) Fifty years later Professor Renouvin offered another explanation: "The coded message was sent to New York by the American ambassador in Berlin and transmitted on the British cable line." This last version is just as bizarre as the others and does little to dispel the confusion. "Many people expressed doubts as to the authenticity of this document," said Professor Seymour. One fact, however, remained: House was on record, the 26th day of February 1917, as stating the information had come from a phone call. He did not at that time have the original document or a copy of it nor did he have the testimony of a direct witness. It has also been established that the British didn't intercept the telegram at the German embassy in Mexico. House's declaration on February 26 was based on hearsay and lies. "The way in which this dispatch was intercepted provides fuel for endless conjectures," wrote Professor Seymour.

A number of Washington observers were puzzled by the time sequence of the affair. The telegram was dated January 16, 1917. House revealed its existence on February 26. Forty days had elapsed. Why would the British arid House have waited forty long days to release news that would bring America closer to war? For them, time was of the essence. Deliberations over dates and facts did not bother House and Polk. The only thing that mattered was to use the telegram, unverified as it was, to anger and panic the American people into the war. "Mr. Polk," wrote Seymour, "thoroughly exploited this communication: the publication of the Berlin telegram would change irritation into rage. It would strengthen enormously the support people would give Wilson in any action he might take against Germany."

Thus, this highly suspicious document, which many believe today to have been cooked up by British espionage operatives-who are specially trained in the art of forgery and provocation-was waved in Wilson's face by House as irrefutable proof of German perfidy. Somehow the Zimmerman telegram left Wilson skeptical. He wondered whether just a phone call offered enough evidence. He had seen no proof of its authenticity and felt uneasy. Besides, said Seymour, "Wilson was troubled that the publication of the dispatch might trigger a crisis he could not control." House harassed the president. He demanded the dispatch be released for immediate publication. On the following day February 27, House wrote to Wilson: "I hope you will publish the dispatch tomorrow. It will make a profound impression on Congress and the whole country." (House, II, 497) House was so sure the president would do as he was asked that he cabled Ambassador Page in London: "As far as we are concerned we already are at war." Despite all the pressure Wilson hesitated. House became frantic: "X called me twice from Washington. The president's inertia worries him greatly. Like Lansing he wants me to come to Washington in order to push Wilson into action." (House, II, 505) House had become the Moses of the pro-war lobby. "All [the war lobbyists] would turn to House as the only man who could be relied on to direct the president's will," wrote Seymour. In his note, dated March 27, House wrote that he had gone to hustle Wilson: "He [the president] confessed to me he did not feel up to assuming high presidential functions at such a critical time." Then House begged the question: "What is needed is a man made of tougher stuff,

with a less philosophical mind than Wilson. A man who can conduct a brutal war." (House, II, 510). Who could this man be except House? Wilson spoke nobly during America’s last days of peace:

America’s entry into the war will mean that we are losing our heads like the others ... It will mean the majority of people in this hemisphere are falling prey to the insanity of war and are no longer thinking ... Once the people are at war they will forget there was such a thing as tolerance ... What a frightful responsibility it is to have to lead our great peaceful people in the most terrible war, the most devastating that has ever befallen the world and which appears to sap the very core of civilization!

During the month of March House would mercilessly pursue the peace idealist. The president was no match for the relentless House and finally gave in. On April 6, 1917 the president went to Capitol Hill with clenched teeth and announced that America had declared war: "The reason for our action will not be vengeance. We do not want to affirm by a victory the material strength of the United States, we simply want to defend the rights of humanity of which we are the only champions." (House, II, 514)

As stirred as they were by Allied propaganda and the Zimmerman telegram, the American people were still wondering whether they had been told the truth. House complained that Americans "just could not get the message.

The Germans had to fight the country which they had done everything to keep out of the war. It was a severe blow, which they hoped would be offset by the overthrow of the Russian empire. The tsar’s abdication on March 15, 1917 did not end the war between Russia and Germany. As dispirited as the Russian armies were, the war went on. The Kerensky regime did not cease hostilities, and managed to keep more than one million German soldiers away from the Western front. American intervention made it imperative for Germany to make peace with Russia. Germany’s survival depended on how long it would take to disengage its army from Russia, and how long it would take for American troops to cross the Atlantic.

Chapter 37

Revolution in Russia

Germany had managed to delay America's intervention from 1915 to 1917. Submarines had been withheld from combat, apologies given and reparations paid, but time had now run out. Within months the United States would be able to send 750,000 soldiers to do battle in Europe. The American navy would seize German ships stationed in neutral ports and South American navies would be pressured into following suit. The navy would in fact replace the 600,000 tons of British shipping which the Germans sank every month. Within a year, two million U.S. troops would be fighting alongside the Allies. Germany lost its race against time. The Russian front had been baneful for Germany. It was responsible for losing the Marne battle in France, when General von Moltke, panicked by the Russian advance in Prussia, had deprived his right flank of two army corps. It was a war both the Kaiser and Tsar Nicholas II had tried to avoid to the last minute. The two monarchs were cousins and maintained good personal and national relations. The tsar was a peaceful man, rather soft and sad. He would never have been involved in war had he not been railroaded into it by the Pan-Slavic cabal and other conspirators. He regretted constantly that he had been forced to declare war on Germany against his wish.

The Germans had immediately tried to bring to an end a futile war which tied down half their army. In December, 1914 the Kaiser delegated his adviser, Jewish financier Albert Ballin, who owned most of the German merchant fleet, to negotiate a truce, with the king of Denmark acting as official intermediary. Talks were held with Count Witte, a leading Russian diplomat. The negotiations stalled when the tsar felt he could not make Peace without the Allies' agreement. From March to May 1915 a new attempt for peace was made. German Foreign Minister von Jagow informed the tsar that Germany, in exchange for peace, would prevail on its own Turkish allies to let Russia realize its ambitions in Constantinople and the Dardanelles-where the British had just received a severe thrashing. The secret proposals, dated March 10 and May 25, 1915, were transmitted by Maria Vasiltshikova, the tsaritsa's lady- in-waiting. The

war lobby in Russia quickly sabotaged this initiative. No sooner was the tsar in possession of the proposals than a plot was engineered to disgrace the tsaritsa's aide. The tsar failed to stand by her and let her be stripped of her title and exiled by his own enemies. Three months later a third attempt was made. This time it was conducted by the president of the Deutsche Bank, Herr Monkievich. The new offering still included Constantinople, and also added a ten billion gold mark loan. On August 11, 1915 the negotiations were scuttled by the pro-war Minister Sazanov. A fourth attempt, organized by the grand marshals of Germany and Russia, also failed. The Marxist revolution of March 1917 was launched to the cries of "Down with the war!" that was good news for the German military planners. The tsar had recently declared again his unswerving support for the allies, and his overthrow changed Russia's position. But if the German government was to get any benefit from a Russian withdrawal, speed was of the essence: the Zimmerman telegram affair was hastening America's entry into the war. The tsar's demise was well organized and swift. Despite his weakness and incompetence, he had decided to lead the Russian armies personally, with disastrous results. Many of his generals were equally inept, and his ministers were chosen on the advice of the lice-ridden degenerate Rasputin, who was himself advised by his constant shadow, the Jewish usurer Simanovich. The tsar referred to Rasputin as "a saint called Gregory from the province of Tobolsk." The Rasputin-Simanovich manipulation of the imperial family had gone on for eleven years. Rasputin had mesmerized the tsaritsa and her daughters. Rasputin spoke and the tsaritsa rushed to implement his orders, while at the same time she treated her husband with condescension: "I suffer for you just as if you were a helpless small child in need of guidance but yet listen to bad advisers, while the man sent by God tells you what to do." Rasputin's hold was such that when he sent an apple to the tsar to "strengthen his resolve," the potentate of all the Russias did not dare eat it because he regarded it as a holy relic. Rasputin's reign finally came to an end on December 17, 1916, when he was poisoned, repeatedly shot and then thrown into the icy Neva river by his enemies at court.

The imperial family was devastated by Rasputin's death. They followed, pathetic and isolated, his funeral cortege. His hearse carried an icon inscribed with the names Alexandra, Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia: the tsaritsa and her daughters. The British ambassador in Russia himself was at the center of a scheme to overthrow the tsar if he should ever lose his stomach for war. London was apprehensive: the shock of Rasputin's demise might drive the tsar to peace. The ambassador had gathered a coterie of wealthy bankers, liberal capitalists, conservative politicians, and disgruntled aristocrats to overthrow the tsar. Because of his hatred for Germany, the British favored Grand Duke Nicholas to succeed the tsar. Since 1914 the British ambassador had aided and abetted the conspirators, but their very disparity neutralized any positive effect they might have had on the Russian monarchy. Nevertheless, British intervention into the internal affairs of Russia robbed Russian nationalists of any chance of surviving the coming onslaught of international communism. While Russia was drowning

in subversion and treason, only the tsaritsa displayed any firmness of character. She exhorted her husband to assert himself and take charge:

You must not give proof of weakness. The Duma has no right to make war and peace pronouncements: that's your decision. Bang the table with your fist, do not make concessions, show them who is the boss, and believe your tough little wife. Russia likes the bite of the whip, Russia craves it. Be like Peter the Great, Ivan the Terrible or Tsar Paul, crush all before you!"

The pious and humble tsar could neither conceive nor comprehend such exhortations. He prayed God for a solution but he was paralyzed with indecision. The British had spread rumors that the tsaritsa was pro-German, because of her German background, and was working for a separate peace with Germany. General Denikin wrote in his memoirs: "Everyone knows the tsaritsa is demanding a separate peace at any cost." There has never been any documentation to back this allegation. Nor has there ever been proof that Rasputin was connected with the Germans. Trotsky himself admitted in his History of the Russian Revolution: "Even after the Revolution not the slightest proof was discovered that established a link between Rasputin and the German Army." As peace-loving as the tsar was, he remained totally loyal to the Allies, who for their part were only using him. On March 7, 1917, only a week before being overthrown, and five months before being murdered at Ekaterinburg, the tsar gave assurances to French Minister Doumergue that Russia would remain firmly committed to the Allied war. The tsar's unrequited loyalty to the allies had divorced him from the realities of Russia. The war had drained Russia's enormous resources and food supplies had been reduced by half. Bankers' speculations had raised the cost of living by 300 percent and the people went hungry. "There will be massive food riots at any time," a police report stated in January 1917.

Gloom was the order of the day among the tsar's corrupt and incompetent ministers. Navy minister Grigorivich kept repeating: "No one in the armed forces trusts us any more." War minister Polivanov lamented: "The dam is cracking and catastrophe can no longer be contained." Imperial Russia was propped up by the rotten pillars of a false elite. On February 23, 1917 St. Petersburg had a garrison of 180,000 men, almost ten divisions. Four days later they would flee in panic. The revolution started with a march of 90,000 women textile workers. They were on strike because they were hungry, and for no other reason. To cries of "Bread not war," they marched in orderly fashion, without the backing of any political parties. The next day the men, who had noticed little police interference, went on strike. They joined the women marchers to the cries of "Down with the war" and "Down with autocracy." Some students and petty-bourgeois elements also joined in the improvised march. Not a single political party supported these demonstrations. The crowd was tired of so much death in a war they did not understand, and tired of being hungry. When the police were ordered to contain them, the crowd good-naturedly invited them to join the march. There were no incidents. The authorities and the bureaucracy had no understanding of what motivated these people. The tsaritsa blamed the situation on a Jewish politician she called Kedrinsky: "I would like to believe

that this Kedrinsky will be hanged for his seditious speeches. He must hang now. That will be an example to the others," she cabled her husband. "Kedrinsky," or rather Aleksandr Kerensky, a left-wing socialist, was instead invited to join the cabinet a week later.

On February 25, 1917, the streets of St. Petersburg were filled. Orators harangued the crowds. War minister Polivanov was unconcerned: "There are," he cabled the tsar at Mogilev, "a few strikes. They are of no importance." The tsaritsa informed her husband the next day: "Everything is quiet in St. Petersburg." Nevertheless, there had been some shooting, and some people had been killed. The tsaritsa sent another telegram in the evening: "Things are taking a turn for the worse in the capital." She urged that order be restored. On February 27, 1917 a battalion of Georgians was brought into St. Petersburg. The fourth company of the Pavlosky regiment suddenly started shooting at the police, but casualties were light. Some of the mutineers were jailed, but others took their place. The incident created enough confusion to shift the soldiers' loyalties to the side of the protestors. Armed men began marching with the crowds they had been sent to stop.

The Russian government declared a state of emergency in St. Petersburg, but the bureaucracy was in such disarray that the notices could not be posted for lack of brushes and glue. Trotsky commented sarcastically: "The authorities couldn't even stick a poster on a wall." Police chief Rodzianko sent the tsar a telegram: "The moment of truth has arrived. The future of the country and the dynasty is being decided now." The tsar read the telegram but did not understand it: "This fat Rodzianko is again sending me nonsense I do not even think of bothering to answer." In the face of government indecision, the crowds took the initiative. Prisons were opened and prisoners joined a march towards the Mariensky Palace, where the government was in session. The politicians and bureaucrats were terrified at the news. They switched off all the lights and hid themselves in closets and underneath desks and tables. The panic subsided when it was learned the crowd had gone somewhere else. The president of the council, Prince Golitsin, was so shaken up he asked Rodzianko: "Be kind enough not to ask me for anything, because I have resigned."

Meanwhile the crowd had entered another palace, the Taurid, where the Duma, the Russian legislative assembly, conducted its deliberations. The tsar had just dissolved the Duma, but a provisional one had been set up in its stead. The chamber was crowded with thousands of people, with hundreds making speeches in a carnival atmosphere. Kerensky rushed to the crowd with open arms. No one quite knew how to deal with his effusions. New cabinet ministers were appointed at random, and Prince Lvov was hosted on a group's shoulders and declared head of the government by acclamation. The only cohesive groups amid the chaos were the soviets. Soviet cells spread across Russia waiting for the opportune moment to move against the wobbly Russian government. It is remarkable that until this point, not a single leftist leader had directed the crowds. People demonstrated against hunger and the war, but made no specific demands. Confusion was the order of the day. Far away at the front the tsar

sent his wife a telegram on February 8: "The weather here is splendid. I am sure you are well and peaceful. Strong troop detachments have been sent to the front. Lovingly yours, Nika." The tsaritsa was quick to reply that all was not well: "It is necessary to make concessions. Strikes are continuing and many troops have gone over to the revolution.' At Helsinki several officers had been thrown alive beneath the frozen ice. It was only then that the tsar realized something was wrong. He left his headquarters to join his family. His train was constantly stopped by the mobs who had taken control of the railways. At St. Petersburg his personal guard had mutinied against its officers and was demanding their arrest, the infantry had gone over to the revolution, and most of the generals had fled, including the governor of St. Petersburg. On March 14, 1917 the tsar, crushed by widespread betrayal, agreed to the formation of a new government. But it was too late. His weakness had allowed treason to prosper and his power was gone. Grand Duke Nicholas urged him to abdicate. The tsar wanted nothing more. He persevered at his position only from a sense of God-ordered obligation to fulfill a sacred duty. He informed his generals that he was willing to sign their demand: "I agree to abdicate in favor of my son who will stay by my side until his majority, and to name my brother Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich as regent of Russia." The abdication was not enough for some politicians. On March 15, 1917 Petrograd representatives Gushkov and Chulgin demanded that the tsar sign his abdication in favor of his brother Michael alone, and accept Prince Lvov as council president. The next day the reign of Tsar Michael ended abruptly when the crowd shouted that they didn't want any Romanov on the throne. Thus ended one of Europe's oldest dynasties: it was shouted out of power.

The tsar never realized that his weakness was responsible for his demise. In his farewell address to the Russian army he still displayed an amazing lack of perception as well as a misguided loyalty to the Allies who had betrayed him: "Whoever thinks of peace in these days, whoever wants peace, is a traitor to the fatherland." Keeping an alliance with unworthy allies was more important than saving his own country. The new government seemed to be even more determined than the tsar to keep Russia in the war. On March 21, 1917 the new foreign minister Paul Milyukov declared: "The international obligations which will be honored by the Russian Republic also include agreements concluded secretly." Thus, despite 4 million dead, the new Russian republic would continue sacrificing Russian blood for the Allies. The Allies were delighted. The French and British politicians were of the opinion that the new Russian republic would send more troops to the front. The republic's commitment to war was bad news for Germany. It meant maintaining a huge army on the Eastern Front and risking being overun by the Americans. For German war stategists the demise of the new Russian republic was a matter of survival. It had to be brought down at any cost. The downfall of the tsar did not bring the Communists to power. In the spring of 1917 there was scarcely a single hard-core revolutionary in St. Petersburg or Moscow. Stalin had returned from Siberia but he lived in the shadows, barely surviving. The Germans knew the only man who could

make Russia explode was Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, also known as Lenin. They also knew that to enlist Lenin for that purpose was very dangerous: he could inflame Europe as well as Russia.

Chapter 38

Lenin Returns to Russia

In March 1917 Lenin was almost unknown in Europe except among a few groups of the extreme left. German intelligence, however, knew who Lenin was: he was more powerful than a million Russian soldiers. The Austrians could have captured him at the beginning of August, 1914 in Cracow, Poland, but they let him escape to Switzerland. For two and a half years he lived in a room atop a Zurich sausage factory, breathing its rank fumes. He had no money and often thought of committing suicide. He seemed to have lost hope of ever coming to power: "We are old and we will not live to see the decisive battles of the revolution." Lenin represented the hard core of the revolution. He was uncompromising and could not stand half-solutions. The whole bourgeois system had to be smashed to bits. There would be no quarter, no concessions. He had become a deadly enemy of the moderate left, which he saw as compromised in both ideology and action. Lenin would rather wander in the political desert than tolerate any sort of social democrat or Menshevik. Moderate revolutionaries sickened him. He regarded them as false revolutionaries. He had no time for soft organizations and believed that the revolution had to be handled by specialists or "professional revolutionary technicians," as he called them. Crowds were only useful in the framework of an iron organization, subordinated to professional revolutionaries. He compared the implementation of revolution to a surgical procedure: everything had to be prepared, cold-blooded, and skilled. Lenin's will was cold and indomitable. Those who knew him said he was all brain. He certainly was the brain of the revolution. When he died, his brain was measured at 1700 cubic millimeters, among the largest ever recorded. Now his mental power would change the world.

In 1914 the Bolshevik party had consisted of only a few people in Russia. There were seven members of the directorate, three of whom were undercover police. Lenin had to flee to Cracow and then to Switzerland.

His mood alternated from suicidal at his lack of means to elation at the raging world war. He savored the titanic clash of the world's imperialist and bourgeois

powers and saw war as the salvation of Bolshevism: "Without the war" he wrote, "we would see the union of all the capitalists against us." He regarded the devastation of Europe as the clearing away of obstacles for building universal communism. For Germany, Lenin represented the last chance to pry Russia away from the Allies. The March 1917 upheaval in St. Petersburg had overthrown the tsar but kept Russia in the war. The Germans felt Lenin had the power to plunge Russia in a bloody all-consuming revolution which would make it impossible to continue the war against Germany. The Allies had not the slightest knowledge of Lenin but the Germans had had him under close scrutiny since 1914. The decision to use Lenin was not taken lightly. The Germans were well aware that Lenin wanted to bring down imperial Germany even more than imperial Russia. For Lenin world revolution was to start from Germany, not Russia. Germany had a ready- made mass of workers organized along political lines, and the Socialists were close to a majority in the Reichtag. Russia, on the other hand, was composed of eighty percent peasants and two percent workers, who were unorganized and unindoctrinated. Only war, by displacing the peasants from their land, would make them susceptible to indoctrination. The notion that they could own the land they tilled would bring them to communism, although Lenin did not consider them a major asset compared to the enormous German proletariat. Germany's decision to use Lenin in 1917 was ill-timed for his schemes for world conquest. His agreement to go to Russia was perhaps the greatest mistake of his life. If he had had the patience to wait another eighteen months he might have benefited from Germany's 1918 debacle and taken over Berlin in place of the mediocre Liebknecht. Lenin had the genius for organization and action which Liebknecht lacked. He might easily have imposed his will on Germany. The right man at the right place at the right time, he could have launched his world revolution from Germany and swept Europe away. Lenin always regarded his action in St. Petersburg as secondary. His prime interest was in Germany. He was not interested in any country as such, but only in its revolutionary potential. Yet although he knew Germany offered the most fertile ground, Lenin opted to lead the revolution in St. Petersburg. For once his cold reasoning was overruled by his need for action. When the Germans knocked at his door, he could not resist the call to organize a revolution, even in the wrong country.

The Germans played their Lenin card with mathematical precision, but politics, like war, can be full of surprises. They expected Lenin to put a swift end to the armchair revolutionaries who had committed Russia to the Allies' war, yet Lenin almost failed and had to flee to Finland for safety. Trotsky was still in New York and Stalin, although back from Siberia, was in hiding. Other Communist leaders had not fared well in the March revolution, demonstrating themselves to be mediocrities. In fact, some Germans had favored backing Stalin: they thought they could control him more easily than Lenin. Both Lenin and Stalin were regarded as akin to germ warfare: the virus had to bring down a hostile neighbor without affecting those who had released it. Would the virus die off after having performed its assigned task? Could it be contained? These were

the questions which preoccupied the German high command. The Germans would achieve the first phase of their objective: Lenin would eventually put an end to Russia's participation in the war. The second phase was to destroy or contain the deadly virus. Lenin's duplicity, however, was greater than that of any German Machiavelli: he quickly demonstrated who was using whom. A willing tool of the Germans because they had given him the opportunity to implement his revolution, now that he had what he wanted Lenin felt free to turn against Germany. Once in power Lenin would develop a policy of no war, no peace, which would drag the Germans into months of sterile talks. Germany remained an inch short of victory, but was doomed to remain there until its defeat. Orginally, Lenin had tried to bypass the German authorities, planning to cross Germany clandestinely, with a forged Scandinavian passport and a false beard and wig. Trotsky recalled: "All the plans of escape with make-up, wigs, and false passports collapsed one after another." Before leaving Zurich, Lenin had been appalled at the bourgeois character of the March revolution. He sent a telegram to his followers in St. Petersburg: "Absolute suspicion. Deny the new government any backing. Our party would be shamed forever if it became involved in such treason. I would rather break with anyone in our party if that person were going to make any type of concessions to 'social patriotism.' " Concessions were, however, being made at this very moment by his Bolshevik comrade Léon Rosenfeld, also known as George Kamenev, together with the 19 Bolshevik delegates to the government council.

Overcoming its fear and repugnance of the part-Jewish communist leader, the German government made a special sealed train available to Lenin, his wife, and 15 other Bolsheviks of his choice. They were shipped across Germany to the Baltic Sea, where they stopped at Stockholm and finally reached St. Petersburg on April 3, 1917. The bourgeois revolutionaries sent a delegation to greet Lenin at the Finnish border. There they presented him with flowers, which he hated. All their eagerness to please left Lenin cold and contemptuous. He turned his back on them and delivered a short but radical speech. Lenin's attitude was reported to Kerensky and his entourage of craven politicians. They concluded that Lenin was driving a hard bargain. At the same time they were dogged by a morbid fear that he did not simply want to join the political club and share its spoils with them.

Kerensky had attempted to allay the fears of his colleagues, who had spread the word that Lenin was a German agent: "Just wait until Lenin arrives and you will find out he is a good man." The accusation was meant to discredit Lenin in the eyes of Russian workers. The "social patriots," as Trotsky called the bourgeois revolutionaries, had defined their policy toward Lenin in the Duma: "The very fact that Lenin came back via Germany will harm his prestige to such an extent that there will be nothing more to fear from him." Lenin had anticipated this accusation. Before boarding the German train he had garnered testimonials of good behavior from socialist leaders all across Europe, including the German Marxist theoretician Levy. One testimonial to his good Marxism, co-signed by Europe's Marxist luminaries, read: "The Russian internationalists who are now

leaving for Russia to serve the revolution will be helping us by fostering uprisings among the proletarians of other countries, particularly those of Germany and Austria, against their own governments." The testimonial did not mention by what means the "internationalists" were returning to Russia, and the reference to "particularly those of Germany and Austria" was inserted at Lenin's request in order to refute the accusation that he was a German agent. The accusation was purely political. Lenin had been given money and the use of a train by Germany, but he was never an agent as such. He used the Germans for his own purpose, just as the Germans had used him for theirs. Lenin could hardly wait to destroy imperial Germany once his Russian opportunity had been seized. Lenin was not the only recipient of foreign money. Trotsky received substantial funds from Jewish banker Jacob Schiff in September 1917. Schiff's correspondent in Stockholm, the Warburg Bank, even managed Trotsky's account in the Swedish capital. Lenin, like Trotsky, gladly accepted money wherever it came from. If the bankers wanted to invest in the business of revolution that was their business; Lenin would just use the money to achieve his goals. Lenin's eagerness to accept any kind of money led the financiers of the revolution to believe they would get a return on their investments. With the exception of the Jewish bankers, Lenin repaid his financial bankers not with money but with revolutions in their own countries. Lenin's policy was to dupe the enemy at all times: agreements and debts were only valid in the eye of the bourgeois. For Lenin they were the tools of expediency. In this respect he proved himself the supreme dialectical materialist, far above any of his colleagues, who were always embarassed to talk about Germany's financing of Lenin. The historical fact was that without the German millions and the Jewish millions, advanced at a critical time, Lenin's revolution and plans for world subversion would never have gotten off the ground. It was a ludicrous demonstration of Marxist prudery to promote the thesis that the revolution was financed by passing the hat among the proletariat. Communist historians have made themselves ridiculous in attempting to gloss over Lenin's most outstanding characteristic: his masterly handling of money in the service of his revolution. For Lenin the notion that the end justified the means was never an issue. Although charges of German backing raised against Lenin had a certain impact, they were weakened by the mediocrity of those who made them. From March 1917 until Lenin's final grab for power, there were four successive governments within seven months. They were all composed of bourgeois revolutionaries, each of which competed for the position of most inept and most mediocre. Their dismal performance would drive the disappointed masses to the one man who appeared to know what he wanted: Lenin. His talent for organization was everywhere apparent. Every street, every building, every factory was the target of Lenin's agents. "He deftly manipulated," wrote Souvarine, "the levers of the party and utilized professional revolutionaries to the best of their abilities, while at the same time justifying his tactical plan doctrinally.". Peace had now become a popular issue. The bourgeois revolutionaries felt uneasy any time they heard the crowd shout "Down with the war." Tsarism had only recently been overthrown to the same "Down with the war!" shouts. But the war kept going and people continued to die at

the front and starve behind the lines. Everywhere the people had had enough. Lenin correctly sized up the situation. On March 27, 1917 the Petrograd Soviet publicly disavowed Milyukov and his promises to the Allies. The soldiers' soviet on the Eastern front had voted overwhelmingly against continuation of the war, as indicated by the votes of their delegates at Minsk: 610 against 8. "Down with the war!" was accompanied by "Peace without annexations or reparations." This formula, devised by Lenin, was all the more clever because it aped the high-minded principles of President Wilson. Milyukov lost his ministry at the beginning of May 1917. Prince Lvov immediately made concessions, offering five seats to the socialists. He remained president purely for decorum's sake. The most powerful man at this time was War Minister Kerensky, but he did not put an end to the war. The soldiers repeated the slogan: "If peace is infamous, give us an infamous peace" from one end of the front to the other. Some priests got into the act by preaching peace at any cost. Deputy Patriarch Filonenky was cheered by the troops. "Soldiers," he declared at the Duma, "were kissing my hands and feet." Months went by and the frightful toll of war continued to mount, from the Baltic to the Caspian. Scurvy and typhus reaped a grim harvest. The bourgeois revolutionaries did nothing, and the soldiers just walked away from the front. In a few months, more than 2 million soldiers deserted. Most of them were peasants going home to take over the land that had been promised to them. Train loads of reinforcements would reach the front almost empty. Soldiers literally jumped out of them all along the route.

French and British socialist leaders came to Russia to harangue their socialist counterparts in Petrograd: their mission, they explained, was to rekindle the martial ardor of the Russian army. The visit proved embarrassing to the bourgeois revolutionaries. The British emissaries tried to salvage the situation by promising Constantinople to Russia as just one reward among many for remaining in a glorious war. Such promises only infuriated the people all the more, and the Allies were accused of practicing "Pan-Slavic charlatanism." The Allied emissaries included wealthy French Communist Party boss Marcel Cachin, who was informed that the Russian government would support a popular plebiscite in Alsace-Lorraine after the war ended. The British were dumbfounded when the Russian government proposed not only the liberation of peoples conquered during the war but of all oppressed peoples. Particular reference was made to the people of Egypt and Ireland. The British socialists were particularly shocked at the notion of liberating Ireland. The French socialists were also nervous at the prospect of liberating French colonies without the opportunity of socializing them first. Back in Paris and London politicians of all stripes were wondering whether it was Wilson who had whispered such outrageous suggestions into the ears of the Russian govenment.

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The Allies were not about to let the Russian alliance disintegrate for the sake of policies which, even if agreed upon, were not to be implemented before the end of the war in any event. In that spirit, they agreed to the Russian radicals'

slogans: "Peace without annexations or reparations"; "An internationally controlled plebiscite for Alsace-Lorraine"; "Responsibility for the war belongs to everybody and everybody must participate in indemnifying the victims." In exchange for the acceptance of these terms, the Russian government was prepared to launch one last offensive to speed the end of the war. French general Nivelle bombarded the Russian High Command with demands that general Alexyev start the offensive immediately.

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Kerensky was still attempting to placate the Allies when he decided to go to the front and raise the troops' morale for a final battle. By then the Russian army was a mere facade. Seventy generals had been discharged and many others had been assassinated by their men. Thousands of Communist agents had virtually replaced the generals and were manipulating the troops for their own purpose. Kerensky, however, surprised many by his tireless efforts on the front from May 15 to June 24, 1917. Despite chaotic conditions, his oratory managed to inspire more than 300,000 men to fight one more battle. On June 24, 1917 the men were placed under the command of General Brusilov, and. Kerensky ordered a new offensive. On July 1, 1917 Brusilov threw his 23 divisions in a 30-mile-wide assault with the objective of capturing Lemberg. The Russians broke through the Austrian-German lines and took 10,000 prisoners by nightfall. The gallant Russian effort was stymied, however, when two reserve divisions refused to follow up the day's victory. Brusilov conceded there was no way to force them to battle. The German high command, anticipating this last Russian offensive, had rushed six additional divisions to the 72 already fighting on the Eastern front. The German counter-offensive was formidable. On July 19, 1917 the Germans drove Brusilov out of Galicia. Over the next ten days Brusilov would lose 160,000 men. On the Baltic front General von Huttier wiped out Russia's Twelfth Army and captured Riga, the largest port of the Baltic states. Russia had been dealt a devastating military blow.

The news of Brusilov's offensive unleashed massive demonstrations in St. Petersburg. For the first time the Bolsheviks mixed with the crowd for the purpose of directing it. Bolshevik agents shouted: "All power to the soviets!" ceaselessly and soon the cry was taken up by other demonstrators. Léon Trotsky (Lev Davidovich Bronstein) had finally joined Lenin, after being detained in London. Bronstein shed his New York name to become Trotsky, the communist leader, the right hand man of Lenin. Both men were vehement and radical orators whose fiery speeches made the bourgeois revolutionaries sound quite insipid. The crowds flocked over to Lenin in droves. In June 1917, however, the Congress of Soviets was a long way from controlling Russia. 105 Bolsheviks had been elected to the Duma, but that only represented some 14 percent of the assembly. Lenin realized that the Russian proletariat was "less conscious, less organized, less prepared than the proletariats in other countries," and he was anxious to get beyond the Russian state as quickly as possible: the revolution must be Europe-wide or it would fail. "Socialism," explained Lenin, "cannot win immediately or directly in Russia." With only one sixth of the power in the

hands of the soviets, Lenin tried to explain his policies for solving Russia's problems directly to the people. The process was arduous, and he knew that only a dictatorship would enable him to consolidate power. Lenin knew the Bolsheviks could not reach power through laws, elections and consensus, but only through force. Like a tiger, he waited for the precise moment when he could pounce, for he knew power was never given, but always taken.

Chapter 39

Flight to Finland

In June 1917, an uprising took place against the government installed by the March revolution. Lenin had done all he could to indoctrinate the Russian workers, but their numbers were small compared to the Russian population as a whole. He had not been involved with the events of March, and he felt the new uprising would be the vehicle to power. He had, however, serious reservations. The crowds were by his own admission ignorant and undisciplined. Would he risk the future of his organization by depending on an incoherent mob? Lenin opted, against his better judgement, to throw himself, his party, and his resources into this second revoluton. This fateful decision to join a revolution that quickly failed has been obscured and ignored by communist historians. Although Lenin played an essential role in its development, Trotsky twisted this historical fact with a subterfuge: "Lenin," wrote Trotsky, "was sick and had lived in a Finnish country house since June 19. Neither on this day nor on the following days did he go to Petrograd." (Trotsky, The Russian Revolution, vol. II, p. 124) The assumption that Lenin would miss getting involved with unprofessional revolutionaries was reasonable. His mind was too methodical for such an adventure. What is puzzling, however, is that Russia's master revolutionary could really have been absent from Petrograd during such critical days. Since early June the Russian capital had been in ferment, and on June 18, 1917 a huge demonstration had gathered and united both workers and soldiers. The demonstration was felt throughout Russia. "The June 18 demonstration," wrote Trotsky, "made an immense impression on the participants. The masses saw that Bolshevism was becoming a force; the fence-sitters were drawn to it. We were compelled to act on this." The next few days saw violent clashes between anarchists, Communists and anti-Communists. Prisoners were released from jails and soldiers mutinied. The bourgeois revolutionaries, fearing for their lives, had finally turned against the Bolsheviks. Lenin himself denounced, on June 25, 1917 "the savage screams of rage against the Bolsheviks."

While all this was going on, Lenin, according to Trotsky, was convalescing in

Finland. No one ever explained the nature of Lenin's illness. Soviet archives have produced nothing on this question. While every aspect of Lenin's activities has been religiously recorded, there is no explanation as to the sudden illness which forced him to recuperate abroad. The Communist version, or rather non-version, of this critical time in Lenin's history is more than puzzling, it is false. There is no doubt that Lenin was in Finland on June 21, 1917 for reasons which were then unknown, but had nothing to do with the state of his physical health. There is also no doubt that on July 4, 1917, the day the second revolution erupted, Lenin was in Petrograd. Far from ill, he harangued the crowds in the pouring rain from the balcony of the ballerina Kshesinskaya's palace, urging the masses to storm the Taurid palace. Thus Lenin was leading the revolution on July 4 in the Russian capital. But what had Lenin done in Finland between June 29 and July 3, 1917?

Lenin's stay in Finland happened to coincide with Brusilov's offensive. It was precisely when 23 Russian divisions were hurled into a final offensive against the Germans that Lenin left for Finland. There, he would meet with German agents, from whom he would receive new funds in exchange for sabotaging the Russian advance. The fact of German financial aid to Lenin has never been refuted. Before boarding the German train Lenin had of his own admission run out of funds. The Germans had invested in him for services rendered. Now, the Brusilov offensive provided the opportunity for the Germans to find out whether Lenin had been a good investment. Could he sabotage Brusilov? Lenin needed and got more money in Finland. When he returned to Petrograd on July 4, 1917 he finally gave the orders to take to the streets-which he had totally forbidden previously. Lenin knew how much it cost to run a successful revolution, and he did not want an anarchist rabble ruining his chances. He wanted a dictatorship and now he had the funds to impose it. Lenin ordered his people to join the ranks of the anti-war protesters. Public opinion, however, was still concerned with Russia's moral obligation to "fight the enemy." Feelings ran high when Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev screamed in the Duma that the army had to lay down its arms. They were called anti-Russian Jews out to destroy the Russian fatherland. Lenin was publicly accused of being a German agent. Trotsky himself wrote: "In the shops, in the street, everybody was talking about German money." Angry Russians stormed the headquarters of the Bolshevik newspaper Pravda and ransacked it from top to bottom. Next came the party headquarters, and Lenin took flight.

Lenin and Trotsky became dirty words. Two weeks before they had been hailed as heroes of the proletariat. The crowds chanted: "Death to the Jews, death to the Bolsheviks." How Lenin, with his cold calculating mind, could have let himself be involved in such a miscalculation almost defies comprehension. In fact, in their eagerness to sabotage Brusilov's offensive, the Germans had pressured Lenin to act against his own best judgement. They had also underestimated Russian reactions to an attempt to stab a fighting army in the back. As demoralized and fed up as they were with the war, the Russian people were not ready for the betrayal of their soldiers and their fatherland. Lenin's revolution

of July 4, 1917 failed. He was exiled and his collaborators were jailed. The Germans, lacking sensitivity in their evaluation of the Russian psyche, had been too hasty. Brusilov, the one military hero, had been beaten by the treason of the Bolsheviks, who lost him Lemberg and Riga and Lenin was a German agent: such was the Russian perception of Lenin's attempted revolution. The half-socialist government, yesterday so despised by all, experienced a sudden turn of fortune. Kerensky was not only absolved of the Brusilov catastrophe but was made prime minister. Peace had escaped the Germans and revolution had escaped the Bolsheviks. Autumn was coming, and the future was gloomy for both the Kaiser and Lenin.

Chapter 40

Red October

For the preceding twenty years Lenin's theory of revolution had been inflexible: Revolution, particularly in a country where the possibilities for political action are non-existent, is not everybody's business. Revolution must be organized and led by professional revolutionaries, the vanguard of the working classes who are trained in every aspect of clandestine struggle. The party constitutes this vanguard. It must be organized in relation to its insurrectional vocation and to external conditions of instability: that is to say, the party must be totally centralized, authoritarian and rejecting any concession to verbalism. When he departed from his theory on July 4, 1917 he must have rued the day and pondered Karl Marx's observation: "I have sown dragons and I have reaped fleas." For Lenin was in no way a democrat; he was an Establishment elitist. He considered universal suffrage a stupidity, at best a temporary tool. He believed people were by nature incapable of political realism, let alone of planning a revolutionary future. The best brain had to impose its will on the masses. The proletariat must be led for its own good, with or without its consent. Lenin never tired of stating that he was the man for the task: his mind and his organizing ability were superior to all others. He often likened the masses to bleating sheep, but he himself was more of the nature of a lion.

The failed July revolution sent Lenin back to square one. Next time there would be no more popular outbusts. The professional revolutionaries would never again allow the crowds to lead them: they would infiltrate them and take control of them. Iron discipline would prevail in every detail and would be enforced ruthlessly.

The situation was, however, quite different from the one he had encountered on his April return, when he was greeted with flowers. Lenin was discredited and hated as a traitor by the Russians. The Allies, who had realized that he had the potential to pull Russia out of the war, were targeting him, and the International was publicly denouncing him. Yet Lenin would master this impossible situation within two months.

Old Prince Lvov had on July 5 handed over the presidency to Kerensky. Russia was still in the war but not on the offensive. The front had been broken and the Germans controlled the road to Petrograd from Riga. Kerensky, the socialist favored by the Allies, delivered endless speeches and promises. In fact he was presiding over growing anarchy. Hunger was constantly spreading; looting was commonplace. While mobs seized lands and homes, killing their occupants, Kerensky concentrated his efforts on reducing working hours. The Russian army was falling apart for lack of food and supplies. The only ammunition reaching the front was manufactured in Japan and could not be used with Russian weapons. It was at this time that General Kornilov, a war hero who had escaped a German prisoner of war camp, decided to "save the nation from catastrophe" by taking power. What Lenin had attempted from the left, he would attempt from the right. He had been appointed commander-in-chief of the Russian armies in July 1917. He was supported by a part of the bourgeoisie, but in words only. True to form, the bourgeois vision was mean and petty: they would whisper words of support for Kornilov but never at the expense of their own purses. On August 27 Kornilov launched a coup d'etat without financial support. Supported by disenchanted workers, various patriotic elements, and three Cossack divisions, he marched toward Petrograd along the railway lines. Kerensky, panicked, frantically cried for help in all directions. The Bolshevik leaders he had jailed joined in the mournful chorus. Trotsky feared his end was near, Stalin lamented: "The Soviets have now reached the end of a tormented agony" (Souvarine, p. 159). Lenin, who had escaped to Finland, stated: "Now they are going to put us, all of us, before the firing squad, they never had a better time to do it." Lenin understood timing: in a similar case he would not have missed the opportunity to shoot his opponents, as he later would demonstrate.

Kerensky had jailed the Bolsheviks because he feared their ability to overthrow him. Now as Kornilov approached he saw them as saviors: he would release them, he would arm them, and they would do battle with Kornilov. The Bolsheviks could not believe their eyes: the man who had jailed them was putting them back in the saddle.

Lenin followed everything from Finland. He organized thirty thousand men to block Kornilov's access to Petrograd. Kerensky requisitioned all food and supplies, to hand them over to the Bolsheviks. Kornilov met the well-armed, well-disciplined and well-fed Bolsheviks with soldiers exhausted by days of forced marching and months of privation. His appeal to the bourgeois for money to feed his men had yielded nothing. The lack of supplies forced Kornilov to give up and witness the disintegration of his forces. Kerensky was saved but he could no longer return the Bolshevik tiger to its cage. Lenin explained his position: "If the party saved Kerensky from a military coup it was only with the aim of disposing of him in a more definitive way." Only Kerensky's mercantile mentality and sudden burst of panic could have led him to believe otherwise. Lenin had learned his lesson well: the crowd would be inflamed by professional agitators and insurrection would be carried out like a commando raid. Never again in Russia would people be let loose to play at revolution. Now the Bolsheviks

were armed: guns had given them power. Lenin summed it up: "The time has come." Now that Kornilov's coup had been averted, Kerensky asked the Bolsheviks to put down their arms, only to be laughed at. Trotsky became ruler of the Petrograd Soviet and Lenin moved in for the kill.

Lenin organized what he considered a prerequisite for a successful revolution: "Creation of an insurrectional headquarters, occupation of strategic locations, and specific revolutionary operations." All his instructions were given from his hide-out in Finland. Fearing assassination, he would not return to Petrograd until the eve of the insurrection, when everything had been put into place according to his orders. Lenin still had to deal with those Communists who wanted a left-wing coalition with other parties as a way to ensure victory. He was determined to use them for all they were worth and at the same time to ignore what he regarded as half-baked and treasonable ideas. He wooed them by speaking their language: "The party will guarantee the peaceful development of the revolution, the peaceful election of delegates by the people, a peaceful policy of consensus among all left-wing parties within the Soviets, the experimentation with other parties, programs, the sharing of power among parties" (Souvarine, p. 162). While the left-wingers were lulled into supporting the Soviets by such a soothing vision, Lenin worked feverishly for the implementation of his real policy. Acquiring power and never letting it go was Lenin's aim. He made clear that to his henchmen: "Assuming power is a matter of insurrection. Political programs will appear only after power has been seized. It would be disastrous to wait for the doubtful elections of November 7. People have the right and the duty to settle matters by force, not by votes. Any revolutionary who would let such a moment escape would be guilty of the highest of crimes." When the time came, Lenin advised what to do with the left-wing compromisers: "We must wage an implacable war against them and expel them mercilessly from all revolutionary organizations." Lenin was only interested in results. He hired the best professional agitators of the day because he knew they would always outperform the hot-heads. If Lenin were operating today, he would use banks, computers and the news media as the most efficient ways of imposing his will. Gorky was amazed at Lenin's manipulative power, at his utter lack of scruples, and his contempt for people: "Lenin is no towering leader but a cynical manipulator without any regard for honor or people's welfare or human lives." In fact, Lenin had no feelings toward humanity because the only thing that mattered to him was the revolution. People were to be used merely as tools to serve Lenin's revolutionary abstractions. His all- encompassing mind worked out in detail the implementation of his revolutionary theories. Indifferent to money or the trappings of power, he understood the substance and chemistry of power.

Kerensky had given the Bolsheviks power in the form of arms and money for the purpose of opposing a right-wing revolution. Lenin used the power to consolidate and expand. The Russian army was targeted for further infiltration. Lenin brought the cell system, whereby secret agents were positioned at every decision-making level of the armed forces, to a science. There were 200,000 soldiers, whom Kerensky had kept away from the front, around Petrograd. Lenin

infiltrated the whole corps in no time. The Petrograd garrison became Lenin's own private army. Discipline was ruthlessly enforced, and political indoctrination never let up. After years of neglect and disorder, the army had found someone with the iron will to regiment and motivate them. The men may not have understood Lenin's ideology but they respected his drive and single-mindedness of purpose.

Kerensky had no understanding of what Lenin was about. He regarded the Bolshevik leader as just another politician peddling issues and promises as a way to get votes. He never for one second thought that Lenin could have meant a word he said. To Kerensky it was all an act, part of the haggling in the bazaar of politics. When the show was over, they would all sit down and share the spoils of power. Kerensky was quite confident that his haggling ability would get the better of the Bolsheviks: they would receive some power but would share it with Kerensky and his cronies. Five days before the insurrection that would sweep him out of power Kerensky pondered confidently: "Bolshevism is falling apart and we have nothing to fear, Russia is with us." Kerensky saw that very few people actually supported Bolshevism, but he had ignored Lenin's recruitment of forty thousand shock troops among workers and disaffected soldiers in the Petrograd area. Kerensky disposed of a military and police force seventy times superior to Lenin's shock troops, later known as the Red Guards. More than ten million soldiers were nominally under Kerensky's control, but in fact they were totally disorganized and demoralized, unusable for any purpose. As far as the hundred and forty million Russians, they were too hungry to be for anybody. The chaos brought by years of inept government had turned the population into an inert mass. Out of millions of soldiers and people Kerensky could in fact rely on barely 10,000 men! Trotsky wrote: "We were certainly weak but we Bolsheviks were facing an enemy far more numerous but also much weaker than us. Numbers have nothing to do with politics." History abounds in similar cases where a small, well-organized number of people has overwhelmed huge crowds. Lenin knew the necessity of extreme prudence and absolute secrecy. He remembered that his small and simple central committee had been infiltrated by three tsarist undercover agents. He was distrusted by everyone, even his closest allies, like Kamenev and Zinoviev. Lenin gave orders, but never discussed or revealed his whole plan. Since he was a supreme tactician and strategist he needed neither debate nor approval from other members of the Soviets. To do so would have meant security leaks and the ruination of any plan. Lenin believed the greater the surprise, the greater the victory. Consultation and the seeking of consensus were always made to hide and protect his real intent. Only when his purpose had been achieved would he inform his Soviet colleagues of what had happened. By then it was a fait accompli, history.

The last days of the Kerensky government ground out slowly and silently. It rained heavily. Every day at noon, Petrograd was shaken by a blast from the old cannon of the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. On October 23, 1917 Lenin, in complete disguise, moved to a hide-out in the workers' district of Viborg. The area was under virtual Red Guard control. Everything was ready. On the night

of the twenty-fourth the Central Committee was convened secretly. A single man, carrying Lenin's orders, gave each member precise instructions as to what to do, hour by hour.

The General Congress of Soviets was to be held the following day. Lenin had decided not to wait for its opinion, which could have been negative, and took steps to thwart potential trouble: "At the first attempt of doubtful elements [those who would treat with Kerensky] to take to the streets, you will wipe these criminals from the face of the earth." Lenin organized the insurrection meticulously: the town was divided into zones under the authority of militia leaders. Each objective was clearly defined, as were the forces required to reach it. Everyone received weapons suitable to the role he had been assigned. Eighty machine-gun emplacements were ready to open fire. Two specially selected members of the Central Committee would direct the seizure of the railways, the post office, and the telephone and telegraphic exchanges the minute the insurrection order was given. Food supplies had been organized for all the insurrectionists. The insurrection headquarters were located at the Smolny palace, but Lenin had also installed another high command at the St. Peter and St. Paul fortress, ready to take over if for any reason the first high command ceased to function.

While Lenin's iron-fisted preparations were being carried out, Kerensky was still playing politics as usual. In the dead of night, the Bolsheviks seized all of Petrograd's strategic centers: communications, rail stations, power stations, food and weapons depots, all printing plants and the state bank. The next morning General Kovinkov informed Kerensky: "The situation in Petrograd is terrible. There are no riots in the streets, but that is only because the Bolsheviks have taken control of them. Public buildings have been occupied and people are being arrested systematically. Security guards have abandoned their posts. The Bolsheviks also have a list of public officials to be arrested." Due to a delay by the naval units, the army headquarters and the Winter Palace had not yet been taken over. Because the insurrection was conducted with military precision Petrograd was relatively quiet. Lenin refused to appear in public until all public buildings were under his control. At last the naval detachment arrived and landed from the Neva river. The cruiser Aurora lay off the Winter Palace, ready for combat. An ultimatum for surrender was given. There was no response. During the course of an hour and a half the Aurora fired thirty-six times, with only two hits. The damage was negligible, but as Lenin pointed out, the noise was enough to get results without destroying the building. The thousand defenders of the palace capitulated while the cabinet ministers stayed seated around the council room table. They surrendered without any resistance. Their leader, Kerensky, had disappeared in the morning. Dressed as a women, he was spirited away in the official car of the United States embassy. The bombardment had no impact on Petrograd's daily routine. People continued to go to the theaters, which remained open during the entire insurrection. The ruble was worthless; people paid with an egg to get in. As soon as his men were in control of the Winter Palace Lenin took off his wig and heavy glasses and for

the first time appeared at the Congress of Soviets. After four months of hiding out, Lenin had planned and achieved a revolution from his Finnish lair. It was his masterpiece. His sudden re-appearance had a prodigious effect. He was hailed and acclaimed interminably. He had forced everybody's hand, and he had won. In politics winning is everything. Lenin owed it all to his secret tactics. The revolutions of the spring and summer, on the other hand, had failed for lack of a dominating mind. As the applause died down Lenin announced that the war would stop immediately and that all land was forthwith confiscated. He created an "iron government" run by "people's commissars." All knee-jerk democrats were excluded. Lenin demanded that a new Central Executive Committee be elected. The Bolsheviks were in full control of the government, and the absolute masters of Russia. What would Marxism bring the Russian people? Within the first eighteen months eight and a half million would be executed or starved to death, as many dead as in four years of world war. This massive slaughter did not trouble the Bolshevik leaders. Trotsky's answer to critics was: "Melancholy pondering [on the slaughter] did not prevent people from breeding."

On the night of the coup-October 25, 1917 old style-Lenin announced that he would cease hostilities with Germany. Seven months after the tsar's downfall Germany would finally be able to close down its eastern front. Although Lenin and the Kaiser had coincidental interests, both were in actuality playing with fire. Lenin needed peace but had no intention of helping the Germans. The capitalist Reich was a prime enemy, to be brought down by violent revolution. Lenin was not going to do anything to strengthen Germany if he could help it The kaiser for his part knew that Lenin had always wanted to overthrow his regime, and kept an uneasy watch on Bolshevik developments.

Chapter 41

Brest-Litovsk

Lenin's telegram to the Germans for a cessation of hostilities illustrates his Machiavellian turn of mind. He proposed a three-month truce only to delay a formal peace treaty. This would leave Germany without the benefits of a clear-cut agreement. The arrangement would give Lenin time to consolidate Communist rule and to prepare Russia as a base to export revolution without freeing the Germans to concentrate on winning the war in the West. Lenin believed the German workers would follow the Bolshevik example and rise up against the Kaiser. While German-Soviet negotiations were going on he launched a "peace campaign" addressed to all belligerents, "a peace without territorial gains or indemnities." While he appealed to the various governments, his chief appeal was directly to the people. Lenin was well aware that the people have no say in such matters. They leave for war, make war and come back from war with closed eyes and sealed lips. The governments, which are a front for a handful of conspirators-the Poincarés, the Sazonovs, the Churchills, the Sonninos, the Houses, the Bethmann-Hollwegs-are the only ones to launch wars. But Lenin was already cultivating his image as a man of conciliation. The manipulators of governments were at the time perplexed by Lenin's obviously outrageous suggestion. They had railroaded their own countries into war for the express purpose of acquiring loot and land, and thus dismissed Lenin's proposals as the posturing of a madman. The only head of state to respond favorably was Wilson. With patent naiveté Wilson believed he could convert Lenin to his own Fourteen Points for peace. He sent Lenin enthusiastic congratulations which must have made the Soviet leader laugh contemptuously. Wilson's telegram dated March 1918 addressed to the Congress of Soviets read: "Let me take the opportunity on the occasion of this Soviet gathering to express the sincere sympathy felt by the American people for the Russian People. The American people is heartily with the Russian people in its determination to be forever free of autocratic government and to be master of its own destiny."

Four days later on March 15, 1918 Lenin replied: "The Russian Soviet Federated

Socialist Republic takes the opportunity on the occasion of President Wilson's message to express to all the world's people its firm belief that the happy day is not far off when the working masses of all countries will free themselves from the yoke of capitalism and will establish a socialist state." Lenin's Foreign Minister Zinoviev did not hide his contempt for the American president when he told the United States ambassador in Moscow: "With our words we have slapped President Wilson in the face." Ironically, Wilson's capitalist phraseology was virtually the same as Lenin's anti-capitalist pronouncements. As early as January 8, 1918 Wilson had written the gist of his famous Fourteen Points. He had orginally wanted to establish them before entering the war. The main points were: "The right of self-determination for all people," "the abolition of secret diplomacy," "freedom of the seas" and "peace without annexations or indemnities." How the British and their allies would allow people self-determination when they already had disposed of their freedom in secret treaties was another question.

Lenin had accurately assessed all the governments bound by secret treaties: "The war is waged by slave traders haggling over cattle." In fact the Allies were haggling over the Rhineland, Tyrol, Sudetenland, Prussia, Carpathia, Dalmatia, Smyrna, Armenia, Mosul, Baghdad and Jerusalem, as well as other territories scattered all over the world. For several years millions of people had been secretely swapped without their knowledge. Wilson wanted commitments in favor of self- determination, but it was too late; the bids and the deals were closed, as the president would realize a year later in Versailles. All peace negotiations would fail on this account. Lenin knew very well there was not the slightest chance of convincing the Allies of renouncing their booty of land and people. His cynical intelligence understood the usefulness as well as the uselessness of Wilson's peace demands. He would go along, propose an unrealistic peace, since he knew the allies would never accept it. Lenin calculated that the upheaval caused by the allied remapping of the world would open the way to communism. Lenin added a new dimension to traditional imperialism, and to such ethnic enmities as that between Slav and Teuton: the introduction of Communist imperialism. Unlike conventional imperialists, who sought to grab a specific piece of land, Communist imperialism sought to conquer the entire world. It was a basic difference that would transform the world. From Lenin on, age-old quarrels only played into the hands of the Communists. Only cooperation would save nations with a common history and culture.

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In Petrograd Lenin had no choice but to bring peace to the masses very quickly. His October victory was still fragile, and was geographically and numerically limited. Kerensky was still in Russia, in the town of Gatshina, only a few miles from Petrograd. He still had a force of loyalist troops and appeared hostile to Lenin. In the countryside resistance to Communism was on the rise. Lenin admitted, "Everything is hanging by a thread." The thread was a German one. If he let go of it he would be swept out of power as surely as the tsar or Kerensky. Germany was no longer going to put up with Lenin's ambivalence, and sent him

an ultimatum. Lenin realized he could no longer string the Germans along, particularly since his own survival was threatened. On November 23, 1917 Lenin and Trotsky were forced to sue for peace and to begin negotiations with Germany over the terms a month later at Brest- Litovsk. Both sides would gain and lose. Germany would win by having imposed its armistice demands but Lenin would win by cunningly prolonging the negotiations for four months.

The Bolshevik delegates ranged from the grotesque to the sly: a convicted murderess back from Siberia, Comrade Bizenko, and a drunken laborer who picked his teeth with his fork were put forth as the people's representatives, dictating the people's will. Behind these front men operated three of the most important Bolsheviks, the real negotiators. They were Abramovich, Rosenfeld and Bronstein, who were now going respectively by the names of Joffe, Kamenev, and Trotsky. They turned the negotiations into a Marx Brothers routine that left the Germans bewildered. At the sight of the drunkard, the murderess and three devious Jews, General Ludendorff asked in amazement: "How can we negotiate with such people?" Ludendorff would have liked to march on to Petrograd and Moscow and wipe out the Bolshevik nests, but that would necessitate maintaining a large German army in Russia, and Germany needed all its forces on the Western front. At last Germany and Austria agreed in principle, in order to end the dialectical antics, to let the people living within German-occupied parts of Russia decide of their own fate by way of a plebiscite. That was the trio's first demand. Another demand was made to the effect that Germany should evacuate the territories and let the Bolsheviks organize the plebiscite. The Germans, who had observed how on October 25, 1917 less than 10 per cent of the population had imposed Leninist dictatorship on the rest of the country, refused to entertain this notion. Negotiations were thus interrupted for ten days, from December 28, 1917 to January 7, 1918, and the Bolsheviks gained vital time. These delaying tactics helped Lenin's foreign policy but did little to help him on the home front. In fact he was losing ground despite massive repression at every level. The working masses had elected only 175 Bolshevik members out of 717 members of the Constituent Assembly. It was a stinging rebuff which Lenin was not about to tolerate. On January 18, 1918 the new assembly met to take their seats for the inaugural session at the Taurid Palace. As they arrived they were threatened and harassed by the Bolshevik police. The whole district was under a state of siege, with machine guns positioned on every roof top. The next day at 5:40 in the morning the Constituent Assembly was summarily dissolved, after only a few hours' existence. Souvarine reported what happened a few hours later: "The workers organized a peaceful march to demonstrate sympathy with the men they had elected. They carried the red flag. Suddenly, without any warning, they were mowed down by machine-gun fire." 21 workers fell dead on the pavement. Thus did Lenin treat the proletariat in its very first popular demonstration against his regime. Such was the plebiscite, enforced by machine-guns, which Trotsky wanted at Brest-Litovsk, and which the Germans were not prepared to grant.

Trotsky invented new ways to delay the negotiations. On January 22, 1918

he engineered, through the central committee of the Bolshevik Party, a novel proposition: the Soviets would not sign a peace treaty. They would declare peace unilaterally and demobilize. Trotsky calculated this temporizing would give the German Marxists time to organize in Germany. Professional agitators had had a certain success in promoting the slogan "Peace without annexations" among the German workers. The most aggressive agents of Bolshevism in Germany were Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, both co-religionists of Trotsky- Bronstein, Kamenev-Rosenfeld, and Joffe-Abramovich. Luxemburg and Liebknecht had orders to exert maximum pressure on the German negotiators at Brest-Litovsk to force them to accept Trotsky's demands. Steelworkers' unions were enlisted to spearhead public demonstrations. Soon, five hundred thousand workers would join the protests. It took all of Ludendorff's skill to defuse a potentially disastrous situation and put the men back to work within a week. Ludendorff thus experienced the subversive actions of alien agents within the borders of Germany, which he called "so many daggers stabbing our soldiers in the back."

The German High Command could no longer tolerate Bolshevik intrusion in its internal affairs. At that time occurred a fortuitous event for Germany: the immense land of Ukraine, rich in the wheat so critically needed in Austria and Germany, proclaimed itself an independent republic. A Ukrainian delegation came to Brest-Litovsk to sign a separate treaty of peace and collaboration with Germany. The richest part of the land would escape the Soviet grasp. On February 9, 1918 at two o'clock in the morning, the German-Austrian-Ukrainian peace was signed. Ukraine would immediately deliver a million tons of wheat to Austria. When the Bolsheviks attacked the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, German-Ukrainian collaboration became an alliance, which would free German troops from Southern Russia.

The treaty had thwarted Trotsky's blackmail. In a state of rage he stormed out of Brest-Litovsk on the first train to Petrograd. Without a peace treaty, the German troops were ordered to advance toward Petrograd. The Germans met no resistance and their offensive was swift: "It is the most comical war I have ever experienced," said General Hoffman who led his troops by train. "An infantry detatchment is loaded, along with machine guns and a mortar, on a train riding to the next station. The Bolsheviks are taken prisoner and the station is captured. Then a new detachment is brought up by rail and so it goes." At that rate the Germans stood to reach Petrograd within two weeks. Lenin realized that his delaying tactics at Brest-Litovsk had not paid off. In fact, they had backfired. The possibility of utter defeat for his Communist revolution was real. This time, he knew, he would have nowhere to run. Lenin reorganized his priorities. He was prepared to agree to almost anything as long as he could retain some part of Russia as a Communist base. The French Embassy, desperately trying to keep him in the war, was offering divisions and millions in gold. The Central Committee agreed to accept "the help of the French imperialist bandits against the bandits of German imperialism."

The Kaiser's "bandits" were by now half way to Petrograd, just 100 miles away

from Lenin's stronghold. Trotsky, who had wanted to put up a fight, was finally won over to Lenin's viewpoint and provided him with the crucial vote required to sign a peace treaty. On February 26, 1918 the Bolshevik delegation appeared once more at Brest-Litovsk. This time there were no delaying tactics. The Soviets hardly looked at the documents. On March 3, 1918 they signed a peace treaty with Germany. For Lenin the choice had been peace or extinction. "Yes," declared Lenin, "this peace is our most horrendous defeat; yes, this peace is a major humiliation for Soviet power. But we are just not in a position to force history."

* * *

Germany's gamble on Lenin had paid off. Without him Russia would still be at war. Furthermore, Lenin had been neutralized, just as his revolutionary doctrine was about to spread like a typhus epidemic. Little was left of the Russian empire: the Baltic countries, Poland, Byelorussia, Ukraine, Crimea and Tiflis were in German hands. The Soviet empire had shrunk to the size of an indigent province. Romania, Russia's ally, had been defeated by General von Mackensen. It capitulated five days after Brest-Litovsk. Besides losing the Dobrudja, Romania had to lease its oil-wells to Austria and Germany for a period of ninety years as well as give Germany an option on all meat, corn and feedstock for the following eight years. For Germany the satisfaction of winning on the Eastern front was marred by the landing of hundreds of thousands of American troops on the coast of Brittany and Bordeaux. But the British blockade was of little import now that Germany had access to all the food and raw material at their doorstep. Germany was poised to win the war in March of 1918: plentiful supplies were assured, Bolshevism had been pushed back into an icy corner of Russia, and the wealth of Russia was at Germany's disposal. Only the intervention of the United States government threatened German victory.

Yet, the Reich had to make up for lost time with a tremendous thrust westward. The Germans were led by the greatest military genius of World War I, General Ludendorff, the right-hand man of Marshal von Hindenburg. The German war machine was at the peak of its efficiency: in less than three months 600,000 soldiers were brought back from the Eastern front, along with all their equipment, to reinforce German positions in Champagne and Artois. Ludendorff was methodically massing the entire German army for the final round.

Chapter 42

Ludendorff at the Gates

“Where was France at the end of 1917?" This was the question André Tardieu would ask in his book, Peace. Tardieu had been a relentless propagandist for Pan-Slavism at the beginning of the war and would later become president of the Council of Ministers of France. Tardieu answered his own question unequivocally: The reverse of April, 1917 created among a number of people a desire for immediate peace. There was mutiny at the front, defeatism in the rear lines, and treason on the march. Romania had delivered its wheat and oil to the enemy. Lenin’s rise to power had sent hundreds of German battalions against us. American war preparations were particularly slow. Our armies were immobilized by lack of gasoline. The British had suffered the disaster of March, 1918 and the French had suffered an equal disaster at the Chemin des Dames. The Germans were on the Marne and Paris was being bombed. Confidence in the French head of government was low and it was said in the House that he was losing the war. On September 29, 1919 Clemenceau publicly revealed a bitter exchange he had had with British Prime Minister Lloyd George: Lloyd George: "Do you recognize that without the British navy you could not have carried on the war?" Clemenceau: "Yes." American oil shipments to France prevented a collapse of the war effort. Tardieu, sent by Clemenceau to the United States, has given some telling figures: "If I had not succeeded at the beginning of 1918 in obtaining from President Wilson the massive help which raised our [petroleum] reserves from 47,000 tons on February 1 to 237,000 tons by April 30, the two battles, one defensive and the other offensive, which decided victory would not have been won." How would Ludendorff first win, then lose these battles, which the French would have lost without American oil and the British navy?

First-hand witnesses like Clemenceau and his military aide, General Mordacq, offered the best record of France’s near collapse and Germany’s brush with victory. General Mordacq’s record of events, on a daily basis, has been acknowledged as factual by most historians. On March 21, 1918, at nine in the morning, the British were under attack at St. Quentin. For five hours they had

been relentlessly pounded by Ludendorff's ninety divisions. Then General Huttier, who the previous year had conquered Riga, threw in the Eighteenth German Army. Within hours the British front had collapsed and the British retreated in panic. The Allied front line had been breached. General von Marwitz's Second Army and General von Billow's Sixteenth followed suit. "Within forty-eight hours," wrote Renouvin, "the British were retreating in a rout." Clemenceau was informed by the military on April 25 that [British] General Haig would have to capitulate before two weeks and that the French army would be lucky if it could do the same. (Clemenceau, Greatness and Misery of Victory, p. 22) "France is in supreme danger. The British are running for the North Sea to get home. Haig has no more reserve troops and England cannot provide men for immediate combat duty" (Clemenceau, p. 25). The Germans had opened up a major breach exactly at the junction of the British and French armies, which were split in two. Both could think only of saving their own hides. The British priority was to cover their escape routes, namely the Channel ports of the North Sea, and the French strove to defend Paris. Marshal Foch himself said: "Ludendorff's divisions have just swung open both halves of the door."

French ministers met in haste with the generals in Doullens. French president Poincaré was brought in for appearance's sake, but now it was Clemenceau who was in command. He offered the British reinforcements on the condition they would accept General Foch as supreme commander of all Allied forces. The British objected at first, but events would soon change their minds. Ludendorff fanned out his troops from south-west to north-west. Huttier reached Montdidier. The Allies had a brief respite when some of Huttier's divisions arrived late from the Russian front. The Allied losses were enormous. 90,000 French and British soldiers were taken prisoner. On April 3, 1918 the British were forced to accept Foch's leadership. Their acceptance was only tactical, and only for the purpose of securing more French troops to cover their retreat. Foch's actual recognition as "Commanding General of Allied Forces" only came on April 17, 1918, when the British were hit by Ludendorff's second offensive. The second offensive began on April 8, 1918 between Armentières and La Bassée. The Sixth German Army's thirty-six divisions crossed the river Lys, and annihilated two Portuguese divisions which had bogged down in the mud of Flanders. The Germans seized Kemmelberg, the highest hill of the region, on April 25, 1918. This was a ploy to draw French divisions away from the main front. After the Allies fell into the trap, Ludendorff then applied maximum pressure against the weakened Allied front. While Ludendorff prepared for the next thrust, he had to deal with the scarcity of munitions and supplies. Austrian and German soldiers had to live on a ration of 34 grams of meat, 14 grams of fat and 165 grams of bread per day. Supply convoys were critically short of gas and horses. Yet the Germans still managed to deliver two major consecutive blows against the British. Clemenceau wrote: "I just saw one of the last British contingents. Its sorry state was proof that our excellent ally was on its last legs." (Clemenceau p. 47) At the conference of Abbeville on May 2, 1918 Foch was just as alarmed: "The last enemy offensive brought losses of men and materiel out of all pro-

portion to the losses of the last three years. British infantry suffered greater casualties than they ever have before. The French suffered similar losses and it is inevitable that worse is to come." Clemenceau was stunned when the British decided to cut their losses and let go of nine divisions. The loss of 200,000 men in March, 1918 was more than they could stand. The move almost triggered a fist fight between Lloyd George and Clemenceau. Foch admitted: "The outcome of the war now depends on the success of an enemy offensive at certain locations." Both Britain and France were demoralized. The French Socialist boss Merrheim was already conceding defeat: "We are in the position of losers." Even Tardieu, the flamboyant war-monger, had grown gloomy: "General Gough's British army broken and thrown back on Amiens. The March 23 German bombing of Paris and the rupture of the Anglo-French front brought us back to the worst hours of 1914."

Ludendorff concentrated his third offensive against the French. The shock was such that only the redeployment of French troops from Flanders saved France from collapse. The battle took place at Chemin des Dames and soon became a bloodbath. Bodies piled up in mountains: 422,000 French soldiers were killed, almost a third of France's casualties for the entire war. On May 27, 1918 the Kronprinz - the German Crown prince - ordered thirty divisions to take the offensive along a thirty-mile front. The objective was to penetrate French lines to a depth of fifteen miles and reach their munition and supplies depots. The offensive was successful beyond expectations: "After the Chemin des Dames catastrophe, the rupture of the French front, our troops have been thrown back to the Marne river." (Tardieu, Paix, p. 46) The French lost another 160,000 men. The Germans took 50,000 prisoners. On May 29 Soissons fell and on May 31 the Germans took Dormans and Chateau-Thierry after crossing the Marne. Ludendorff was within an hour's drive of Paris.

The most important witness to this debacle was General Mordacq, who reported directly to Clemenceau:

May 27, 1918: Chemin des Dames, supposedly an impregnable fortress, fell without resistance at the first German thrust. The bridges of the Aisne river were taken and to this day we were still trying to find out how. May 28: Fisme fell and the Germans reached Soissons after taking a considerable number of prisoners. There is great emotion in Paris. May 29 and 30: The Germans take Soissons, cross the Arlette river and reach the Marne on the 30th. May 31, June 1: The Germans control the Marne from Dormans to Chateau-Thierry.

The German offensive had advanced three times further than expected by Ludendorff himself. It took incredible French efforts to stem the tide. General Mordacq concluded: "During the battle of the Chemin des Dames, the Allies lost 60,000 prisoners, 700 cannon, 2000 machine guns, a large amount of artillery and air force materiel, major depots of munitions, supplies and food. The railway, so vital to supply Châlons from Paris, was no longer usable." It was a disaster. The general did not even mention the enormous number of dead and wounded.

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As if that weren't enough the Germans had launched a fourth offensive in the direction of Compiègne. Here again General Mordacq has left some invaluable notes: May 28: General Duchesne visits the Belleau headquarters. He is in command of the Sixth Army and he has retreated to Ouchy-le-Château. The Germans are advancing and we have nothing to oppose them. Duchesne is complaining that since the beginning of the offensive he has not seen any great leader emerging. We are sleeping the night at Provins, headquarters of General Pétain, who criticizes Foch for having sent the reserves to the north of France and to the Somme River. He has been totally opposed to it. He said the divisions were badly deployed and the artillery had failed. On May 29 we just escaped the Germans on our way to Père-en-Tar-denois. At Fresne, General Degoutte informs us that divisions had been thrown into battle without any artillery support. It is a tragic sight to see the general poring over tattered maps while couriers on motorcycles keep arriving announcing the advance of the enemy. I left him knowing I would never see him again. It is one of the most heart-rending memories I have of this war. We are returning to Paris. The situation is confused. The House of Deputies is in a panic. On June 14, 1918 the House of Deputies was crawling with cowards and conspirators. There were motions to punish those responsible for the debacle. Clemenceau fought like a tiger to save his defeated generals. "If I had given way a single minute," he said, "the whole High Command would have gone." And General Foch would have been the first to go. Said Clemenceau: "I do not boast when I say I saved him." Without this irascible old man of seventy-six years, often rude and with a cloudy political past, France would very likely have collapsed by mid-June of 1918. As with all drowning democracies, it took a strong man to save France. Clemenceau was that strong man, tireless and intractable. Former German Chancellor Prince von Bülow wrote: "As in the days of the Convention, leaders emerged to handle the crisis." Clemenceau, with a scarf wrapped around his neck, a rumpled old hat on his head and a walrus moustache, ran from crisis to crisis, firing the incompetents and raising the morale of the exhausted and dispirited soldiers.

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Germany did not have such an asset. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg was a cultivated man but out of his depth in politics. Sad and uninspiring, he had muddled through blunder after blunder. As early as 1914, he had lost all credibility and was unable to conduct serious negotiations. The kaiser fired him in July, 1917 and a new chancellor, George Michaelis, was appointed. The new minister proved himself totally incompetent and only lasted three months. His successor was Count von Hertling, well-meaning but also inept. He was a sickly academic and a priest was always on call to give him the last rites. Hertling somehow survived politically for twelve months. He was then replaced by Prince Max of Baden, an amiable man of wholly liberal thinking, who was overwhelmed by the position and resigned three months later.

None of these men were a match for the formidable Clemenceau. They dissipated German military gains with turgid politics. Clemenceau, on the other hand, was thundering his way out of defeat: "I am presenting myself to you," he roared to French deputies, "with only one thought: total war. All defeatists will be court martialed. There will be no more peace campaigns or demonstrations, there will be no more treason, no more half-treason. My program is the same everywhere: I wage war at home, I wage war outside. I will continue the war until the last minute, because the last minute will be ours." Germany might have been imperial, but somehow traitors were tolerated. While Clemenceau turned the firing squad on the slightest traitor, German traitors were left to undermine national resolve. Socialist congressman declared with impunity: "We will sabotage the German army in order to start world revolution." Socialist congressman Strobel declared that a German victory would be "contrary to socialist interests." Former Chancellor von Bülow wrote: "There were many traitors to the nation among our socialists, while they were none among the French, the British, Italian or Belgian socialists." Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, the Communist Jewish agitators who were instigating riots in Berlin for the purpose of overthrowing the German government at the end of the war, announced: "The revolution will start as soon as the military situation worsens." The imperial government not only did not punish the traitors but it did nothing to back or encourage those socialists who were loyal and patriotic. Communist saboteurs were allowed to disrupt war factories and push their propaganda on the workers, a situation which no other country tolerated. Von Bülow noted the difference: French law punished to the utmost propagators of "pacifism and defeatism." The editor of the socialist and pacifist paper Bonnet Rouge was arrested and put to death a few days later. Interior Minister Malvy was fired and exiled in disgrace because he was accused of being soft on pacifism. Former foreign Minister Caillaux was jailed as a defeatist and barely escaped with his life. The Egyptian banker Bolo Pasha was arrested for "corruption" with Germany and for pacifism. The charge was groundless but he was nevertheless courtmartialed and executed twenty-four hours later at Vincennes. Pompous declarations about liberty and fraternity just made Clemenceau laugh: "Woe to the weak. Shun all who would put you to sleep. We are at the height of an implacable war of domination." Clemenceau committed excesses and injustices but they were based on the unshakable conviction that nothing could stand in the way of the war effort. Clemenceau's ruthlessness came just in time. Ludendorff was almost at the gates of Paris and the French authorities were preparing to flee south just as in 1914. Clemenceau had somehow singlehandedly managed to stem the panic and re-establish order. Despite its outstanding success on the battlefront, Germany was still short of victory. Hindenburg had hundreds of thousand of troops in Russia and Ukraine, which were now essential if Germany was to win the war. The troops were left there to ensure the delivery of wheat to Austria and Germany. Forty other divisions had also been forced to remain between Kiev and Riga in case Lenin should sudddenly break the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Ludendorff desperately needed these divisions; his military genius could not offset their absence forever.

Chapter 43

14 Points and an Armistice

In 1918 the United States government landed 2,082,000 soldiers on the continent of Europe. That was double the number of the entire German army on the Russian front. In January only 195,000 Americans had landed but six months later the number swelled to 1,200,000. In addition to men, the United States poured in materiel and food. Overnight the British and the French were being replenished with whatever they had lost, or whatever they needed. In 1917 American bank loans to the Allies had accounted for 95 per cent of United States exports to Europe. The Allied imports were enormous: five billion tons of food, five billion tons of supplies, and a billion and a half tons of steel.

Ludendorff was aware of the massive American influx but calculated that he could still outmanoeuver the enemy. When Admiral von Hintze, the Kaiser's envoy, asked him whether he could defeat the enemy totally Ludendorff answered: "Categorically yes." Within three months Ludendorff had overwhelmed the Allies on three separate occasions with 130 divisions, while he still had 77 in reserve. For the final thrust he would deploy two million men between Reims and the Argonne river. In France a quiet soldier was waiting for him: General Pétain, who was later to become marshal and head of state. Pétain was called "the victor of Verdun" because for six months he had held the German army in check in the city of Verdun. While Foch was an aggressive general, Pétain was primarily a defensive strategist. He was careful to keep casualities to a minimum. He had noticed how other French generals had tried to hold out in front-line positions only to have their men massacred. He chose to duplicate Hindenburg's strategy. He would secretly abandon his forward positions and build up formidable defenses in the rear. As Pétain knew, Ludendorff would no longer be covered by his artillery once he reached the reinforced rear lines.

On July 15, 1918 Ludendorff attacked Pétain with 47 of his 207 divisions. He overran the first lines with the greatest ease, but his heavy artillery had pounded empty terrain. Pétain's artillery was swiftly wheeled back. Pétain's guns met Ludendorff's First and Third Armies with millions of 75 mm shells. At first

Ludendorff fell into the trap. His troops advanced three miles and crossed the Marne river, but he stopped them going any further.

Since the debacle of Château-Thierry Foch realized he had to organize a massive counterattack. In that spirit he sent no major reinforcements to Pétain's defensive positions. Foch ran the risk of annihilation but he had decided more out of stubborness than skill to employ his offensive strategy. On July 18, 1918 he ordered General Mangin to make a frontal attack. It was on that day that the German High Command would make its only major error of the whole war: it underestimated the potential of tanks designed for assault. It is an irony of history that in 1940 and 1941 the German Reich would rout the armies of its opponents all over Europe, thanks to the tanks of the panzer divisions. But in 1917 the German High Command had not yet been convinced of the efficacy of tanks. The British and the French had failed in their first tank offensives, losing half their armor in a hail of artillery fire. In 1918, however, the Allies had built much improved versions. The Allies sent thousands of them, in a continuous wave, until a breach of the Ludendorff front was effected. This time German fire power was not able to stop the flow of new tanks. Mangin advanced thirty miles deep into the German lines and took twelve thousand prisoners in one day. The German supply lines were overrun as well. Despite this reverse Ludendorff managed to maintain order and discipline. He organized an orderly redeployment behind Fismes and established a new German front on August 2, 1918 near the river Vesle. The setback was not a major disaster but for the first time the Germans had lost the initiative. Hindenburg was confident: "Five times during the war I've had to pull back my troops and I always ended up beating the enemy. Why shouldn't I succeed a sixth time?" Ludendorff was also optimistic about his prospects: "The German army will be able to take the initiative again." Ludendorff still had 205 divisions at his disposal. His soldiers were battle-tested and had always displayed the highest bravery and discipline. The Allies conceded they did not have the man-power to match such an enormous and well-organized force. The lack of Allied man-power would soon be remedied by an influx of 1,145,000 American soldiers. By July 1918 the United States had sent 27 divisions to France. Nineteen of them were combat ready and the rest could be sent to the front within four months.

On July 27 Clemenceau sent a telegram to General Pershing: "Cordial congratulations for the creation of the First American Army. History awaits you, you will not fail it."

On August 7, 1918 Foch was elevated to Marshal of France. The next day he stealthily moved his troops towards Amiens. A thick fog veiled his maneuvers. The Germans were surprised by the attack, particularly the number of tanks involved, and were forced to retreat another ten miles. The Allies now controlled the road from Amiens to Roye. Ludendorff conceded: "This is a black day for the German Army." He would wait another three days for a complete report to evaluate Germany's chances of victory: "We must face facts and figures. We are at the limit of our strength, the war must end."

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Ludendorff had said the definitive word. Peace was no longer a wish: it was a necessity. Germany would have to negotiate a peace and agree to compromises. Its bargaining power would be lessened, but would still carry some weight. Germany had lost a battle but its forces were still in France, while none of the Allied armies were in Germany. Ludendorff had in mind a peace in which the status quo ante bellum, borders and all, would be restored. Since October 1917 many leaders of the West had become concerned at the rise of Communism. Lenin had stated that the Bolshevik revolution would sweep the world, and the intrusion of Communist agitators was becoming ever more evident. The Allies were faced with choosing between a policy of conciliation to meet a universal threat or the old policy of secret treaties, expansionism, colonialism and revenge. The odds were slim that they would opt for conciliation. They had not wanted to hear or talk of peace when they were losing on the battlefield year after year. Now that they had experienced some success the possibility of peace seemed even more remote. Chancellor Hertling had little understanding of Allied intentions. On September 3, 1918 he told his ministers: "We must say to our enemies: you can see for yourselves that you cannot beat us, but we are ready, as we have been on many occasions before, to conclude an honorable peace." His offer was greeted with derision by the British and the French. They had decided to end the conflict on the battlefield and to crush Germany. After a lull in the fighting the Allies took the offensive on August 20 and advanced on the Ailette and Cambrai. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were forced to retreat and establish a new front.

For Germany there was yet hope of bringing back its divisions from Russia. If Communism was gaining influence across the world, it was not faring so well in Russia itself. Lenin was increasingly challenged by nationalist forces, anti-Bolshevik armies and other hostile elements, which were constantly increasing. In desperation he decided to sign an accord of cooperation with Germany to free his hands and deal with his internal enemies. The accord allowed for the return of a half a million German soldiers to the Western front. But it would take three months to move them and by then it might be too late. The American forces had joined the front and were proving excellent soldiers. Nevertheless, in mid-September Germany, though weakened, was certainly not defeated. Tardieu noted: "By September 28, 1918 the enemy had lost most of the ground it had won from March to June but there are still 68 divisions in reserve, representing more than one million men. They may be weakened, but so are the Allies."

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The war continued to inflict massive casualties on both sides. The Kaiser kept repeating: “We must catch the right moment to settle with the enemy.”

But the time never came. Within three weeks German’s fortunes turned markedly downwards. Her allies Bulgaria and Austria were defeated, and Turkey capit-

ulated. Germany was now alone in the face of vastly superior forces. Ludendorff showed great heroism, but he just didn't have the numbers. St. Quentin, Roulers and Lille fell and Ludendorff retreated to the Siegfried line. The Turkish and Bulgarian defections and the warning that Austria would soon capitulate prompted Ludendorff to send a telegram to the German High Command on September 21: "We should make contact with the United States."

On October 1, 1918 Ludendorff, somewhat agitated, summoned two liaison officers from the Berlin Chancery to his headquarters. He gave them the following message: "Would you please transmit a pressing demand regarding the immediate dispatching of our peace offer. The troops are holding out today but one cannot predict what will happen tomorrow."

Later Ludendorff sent a second message: "Our situation is still honorable. An enemy breakthrough, however, can occur at any time, in which case our peace offer would come at the worst time. I have the feeling I am gambling. There is the likelihood that at any time and at any place a division can fail in its duty." In fact no German division ever failed in its duty. Soldiers and officers alike stood their ground. They waded knee-deep in mud in my native valley of the Semois and as a young boy I recall witnessing the unshakable German devotion to duty. Sedan remained German right until the day of the armistice.

On October 25, 1918 British Marshal Haig confessed to Foch and Pershing that his troops were tired out and the enemy remained extremely tough: "We are exhausted. The units need to be re-organized. Germany is not militarily broken. In the past weeks German armies have retreated while fighting very bravely and in the best order."

Haig's observation was born out by the facts. On September 20 Ludendorff still had 68 divisions in reserve. In the last hour of the war seven were still available, while 139 were on combat duty. Tardieu agreed: "The vigor of the German resistance in critical circumstances was evident until armistice day." (*Peace*, p. 83).

A few days before the armistice the French military thought they would have to spend another winter at the front. Foch told the House just twelve days before Compiegne: "I am not in a position and no one is in a position to give you an exact date. The war could last three months, maybe four or five, who knows?" Lloyd George also watched the casualties: "Right now each of our armies is losing more men than in any other week during the first four years of the war."

The war had yielded no victors. Both sides were tired and bloodied.

Churchill himself, who was no friend of Germany, admitted publicly that only the great qualities of the German people could have enabled them to maintain a struggle against three quarters of the world. After 1500 days and nights of intensive combat Germany was, at the beginning of 1918 still fighting the Allies well outside its own territory.

In October 1918 Germany declared its willingness to cease hostilities on the basis of Wilson's fourteen points. The Kaiser had, through third parties, already

informed Wilson that Germany would evacuate France and Belgium without conditions. The Kaiser's offer had stood since August 8, 1918, but remained unanswered by the Wilson administration. It would take another 100,000 dead before Wilson acknowledged the German appeal.

Ludendorff had advised an end to hostilities, however when he saw the Allies had ignored the German appeal, he reported: "The German army is still strong enough to contain the enemy for months. It can win localized battles and infleict heavy casualties on the Allies.

Marshal Hindenburg likewise told the Reich chancellor on October 3, 1918: "Although my position is becoming more critical by the day the German army remains solid and continues to resist all Allied attacks." Unlike Poincaré who, far from the trenches, screamed for more blood, Hindenburg was a deeply compassionate man: "Each day lost costs the lives of thousands of good men." The old marshal also felt the gravity of Communist subversion inside Germany and its link with Petrograd. The Communists were waiting for the defeat of the German army to launch an uprising. Already German supply lines were being infiltrated by Red agitators. It was reminiscent of St. Petersburg in March 1917.

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Although the Soviets had publicly stated their aim to communize the entire world only Churchill, among all the Allies, took the threat seriously:

> "The Bolsheviks represent an international conception of human affairs which is totally alien and hostile to all our ideas of civilization."
> (*World Crisis*, vol. IV, p. 18)

After two months of ignoring the German peace appeals, Wilson finally replied on October 8, 1918. He asked questions which had already been answered by the Germans in their first appeal: "Does the German government accept the Fourteen Points in their entirety? Will the German government evacuate all occupied territories immediately? Does the German government speak on behalf of the authorities who have waged war until now?"

On October 11, 1918 the German Reich replied. Germany agreed to everything: "The new government approved by absolute majority speaks in the name of the German people."

On October 14 Wilson sent a second note demanding the destruction of all German military power and the transformation of German political institutions. William II knew what it meant: "This aims squarely at the removal of the monarchy." Despite Ludendorff's strong opposition (he resigned in October 26), the government, headed by Prince von Baden, gave in to all demands "in the name of the German people."

On October 28, 1918 Wilson sent a third note demanding an armistice whereby "it would be impossible for Germany to take up arms." The armistice and peace, Wilson cabled, could only be negotiated with "representatives of the German people and not with those who have ruled the people until now." Once more the German government agreed.

When Ludendorff protested on behalf of the Germany army, the new vice-chancellor, Payer, replied curtly: "I know nothing of military honor, I am just a wicked bourgeois, just a civilian." Such talk made the German socialists feel that their time was coming at last. "The socialists," wrote historian Marc Ferro, "were calling the tune. They were in power and were waiting for Chancellor von Baden to obtain Wilhelm II's abdication. They pressured him to resign, implying that a revolution would follow."

The predictions of revolution were not idle talk. On November 3, 1918 the first mutinies would occur in Kiel.

Before resigning Ludendorff had stated on October 25: "If the army holds out another four weeks, and winter sets in, we will be out of the woods." Undersecretary Solf then asked point blank: "If a refusal (to comply with Wilson's demands) breaks the negotiations, will you take the responsibility for it?" "Yes," replied Ludendorff.

Hindenburg also opposed Wilson's demands: "It would be better to keep on fighting and save our honor." The Allies realized they could still break their teeth on the German bone. They were bent on a war of attrition. For his part, Wilson was learning, after Germany had agreed to all his demands, that it was in his own camp that peace was not wanted. The Allies had no time for his kind of peace, in which the British would no longer rule the seas, and where French, Italian, Greek and central European politicians could not tear at Germany like jackals after the war.

On October 3, 1918 Wilson decided to ask the Allies "whether they were disposed to conclude peace under the conditions and principles already known." Wilson was of course referring to his Fourteen Points, which particularly stressed "peace without annexations."

The points had been read in Congress on January 8, 1918:

1. "Open conventions openly arrived at." For the previous three years the Allies had signed, in the utmost secrecy, a series of conventions for the purpose of sharing the spoils of war.

2. "Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas." Britain had not the slightest willingness to abide by such a point.

3. "Abolition of as many economic barriers as possible and the establishment of commercial conditions for all nations." The French government wanted just the opposite in order to keep Germany down forever.

4. “Arms in each country will be reduced to a minimum.” The Allies wanted to keep their superiority of arms but wanted Germany totally disarmed.

5. Concerning colonies: “The interests of the populations concerned will carry the same weight as colonial claims." The Allies had already confiscated German colonies for themselves and had no intention of asking the natives what they thought about it.

6. “Evacuation of all Russian territory.” The Allies agreed to this point. Lenin, who had been contained in a narrow corner of Russia, was now unleashed to spread communism throughout the world.

7. “Belgium must be evacuated and restored.” Everybody agreed.

8. “The wrongs caused to France by Prussia in 1871 in relation to Alsace-Lorraine must be righted.” This point was subject to multiple interpretations.

9. “A rectification of Italian borders must be effected in accordance with the principle of nationality.” This point was negated by the secret Treaty of London signed by Britain, France and Italy in 1915. The treaty ignored the principle of nationality, since it promised the Italians South Tyrol, including 240,000 German inhabitants.

10. “Autonomous development of the people of Austria and Hungary.” In 1919 the two countries would be encircled by a band of states controlled by the Allies. This remapping of Central Europe was done without the consent of its millions of German, Hungarian and Slovak inhabitants.

11. "International guarantees for the independence and integrity of Romania, Serbia and Montenegro." This point was vague and did nothing to solve long-standing historical issues.

12. Concerning the nations under Turkish rule, mostly Arab: "Full security and the right to independent development without any interference." This point was illusory. In a secret treaty with France the British had given themselves the lion’s share of the Middle East which included territories, populations and oil. Furthermore, the British Establishment had promised the Arab country of Palestine to the Jews of the world. The Palestinians were of course never consulted.

13. “An independent Polish state will be created which will comprise territories inhabited by Polish populations and which will be given free access to the sea.” The word “access” was understood by the Allies as meaning “annexation” and the point failed to mention that the territories “inhabited by Polish populations" were also inhabited by more than ten million non-Polish people.

14. “The establishment of a general association of nations.” The Allies regarded this point as just another of Wilson’s grand ideas of no relevance or future.

Should the Germans have refused to go along with Wilson’s Fourteen Points? Like most other Europeans, they had no knowledge of Wilson’s physical and psychological state. A man debilitated by illness can often be harmful to others: he is betrayed and irritated by his body. His character is affected and so is his range of actions.

Wilson had been sick and ailing since childhood. His eyes, his stomach, his bowels and his nervous system were affected by illness. His biographer, Bullitt, wrote: "At seventy years of age he was suffering from gastric problems, migraines, nervous disorders and stomach troubles" (President Wilson, p. 264) Freud later diagnosed him as suffering from "typical nervous depression" and noted his paranoiac reflexes, particularly in his belief that he was the reincarnated Christ. Although he did not set out to cause trouble, his absolute belief that he could do no wrong boded ill for humanity. He believed his higher principles would change human nature and the world but his physical and mental condition made him unaware that he was being mainpulated by intriguers and conspirators, both inside and outside America. The First World War was above all an imperialist war. The objectives were strictly material and territorial. No one was fighting, as in 1940, for ideals or a new concept of world order, but to quench a thirst for more trade, more people and more land. This greed for gain would soon submerge Wilson in Versailles, where his hopes for a better world would be forever dashed. He may have realized then that politics is the graveyard of good intentions.

The Germans, lacking British political cynicism, had decided to go along with Wilson’s Fourteen Points. They were not concerned that some conditions were overly severe because they believed their near victory in the summer of 1918 would ensure them an honorable peace. They had been impressed by certain conciliatory statements Wilson had made concerning Germany: "We are in a way jealous of German greatness and there is nothing in our program to thwart it." Wilson had also taken a number of public stands on Germany:

> We know now that we are not the enemy of the German people and they are not ours. They did not start nor wish this horrible conflict. We did not want to be drawn into it either but we feel that we are in a way fighting for the German people, and one day they will realize it, as much as for ourselves.

A most moving declaration. The Germans, however, would have placed less reliance on it if they had heard Wilson’s previous comments, this time speaking as a true politician, to the effect that: "We must not attach too much importance to promises." What would remain of Wilson’s promises a year later? The Allies viewed the Fourteen Points as a threat to the gains they had already made. For

diplomatic reasons they had not publicly opposed them but they were far from agreeing to them. Wilson meant to impose them, one way or another. If the Allies failed to recognize the sacredness of his principles he would bring them to reason by financial pressure: "Britain and France," he wrote to House, "do not have the same ideas as we have concerning peace. After the war we will be able to force them to think like us, because among other things, they will be in our hands financially." (Bullitt, President Wilson, p. 306, 319). The Allies, who were still unsure of winning the war, went through the motions of placating Wilson. Privately they were seething, and feared a premature armistice would undermine their latest battlefield gains. They needed American troops to ensure total victory on their terms.

Wilson's messianic liberalism made for a poor performance in public relations and diplomacy. He treated opposition to his ideas with disbelief and contempt: unbelievers would be financially arm-twisted or bypassed. This attitude led him to negotiate the conditions of the November 11 armistice without even consulting the various pressure groups controlling the politics of America. He ignored the traditional American way of seeking consensus through consultation and bi-partisan compromise. The Republicans were not invited to be associated with his Fourteen Points, despite Wilson's demands being presented as a national plan and policy. Wilson would go to Versailles embroiled in a bitter and sordid political fight. He would not be the spokesman of a united America; he would pursue his own policy and visions. Further, his ill-advised attempt to impose ten candidates of his own choice in an upcoming senatorial election backfired: eight of the ten Wilson-picked candidates lost by a landslide. It was a stinging rebuff that did little to enhance his prestige or credibility on the eve of his departure for France.

Apart from losing face at home and abroad, Wilson also lost control of the Senate. Without Senate approval Wilson lacked the power to commit America to an international treaty such as that of Versailles. Everything he would sign would be at the mercy of a hostile Congress. Congress would indeed reject the treaty which Wilson had signed at Versailles. The armistice with Germany was signed on November 11, 1918. The treaty negotiations would start in January 1919, but they were doomed to failure from the outset. Each participant observed the usual diplomatic niceties, but before the first session ever started there was scarcely a single issue generally agreed on by the Allies. Wilson, who had been so bent on imposing his point of view, no longer had a majority in his own country. In a rare flash of realism Wilson expressed doubts as to the results of the Versailles Treaty: "This will cost us thousands of lives and billions of dollars, just to end in an infamous peace which will condemn us to another and worse war than this one." (Bullitt, President Wilson, p. 297). Behind the lights and applause, which were dazzling a gullible public, the greatest failure in history was taking shape.

Part III

The Scoundrels of Versailles

Chapter 44

The Armistice: a Fraud

“Let us pray to God our sovereign will now have courage to die on the battlefront," declared Count Augustus von Eulenberg, one of the Kaiser's closest aides. The all-powerful Kaiser, however, who had been the god of war for years, was melting like butter during the last days of the war. He knew it was the end, and he had decided to retire to a comfortable life of exile at the castle of Aberemonge. He would not see a German uniform until 22 years later, when the Waffen SS spearheaded the conquest of Holland. The German army, despite its courage and discipline, was slowly losing ground. But it was not the Allies who were responsible. The German army was undermined behind its own lines at home. Since 1917, Marxist agitators and agents had, under Lenin's direction, conducted a relentless campaign of subversion and sabotage. The new Soviet Embassy in Berlin was the center of Communist subversion in Germany. Some of Lenin's agents had been arrested and found in possession of documents and money provided by the embassy. Considerable funds were remitted to the Jewish managers of Communist insurrection: Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. More than 70% of Communist leaders in Russia were Jews and practically all the Communist bosses who would appear across Europe in the following weeks would also be Jews. While the German army fought with patriotic fervor, alien subversives were tearing their homeland apart. They took control of Germany's greatest seaports, sabotaged German warships and spread terror among the population. Officers were murdered and arsenals blown up in Kiel and Lübeck. The terror reached Bremen, Wilhelmshaven, Altona and Hamburg. Marxist thugs were organized into "Iron Brigades" and sent by the trainloads to all strategic points of Germany, where munitions and arms were seized. They took control of railway stations, bridges and road intersections. Berlin was now falling prey to Bolshevik mayhem, where rival Marxist gangs would fight it out for the privilege of destroying Germany. Soon Berlin was at the mercy of ruthless "people's commissars" and so was the rest of Germany.

It was against this background of Marxist terror that German politicians de-

cided to negotiate the end of the war. A frightened envoy called Erzberger was sent to Foch to receive a document demanding Germany's unconditional surrender and to be signed forthwith. Erzberger had difficulty in contacting Chancellor von Baden because the "people's commissars" in Berlin had fired him from his job. The head of the German government had been stripped of all power when Erzberger was summoned to sign a document written in French. After much waiting, Erzberger received a telegram from Berlin: "The German government accepts the armistice conditions presented on November 8." The telegram was signed "Reichskanzler Schluss." Foch was bewildered by the name "Schluss": "Who is this Chancellor Schluss? Who is this gentleman? Neither our High Command nor our government has ever heard of him." Foch was glaring at Erzberger with distrust. For a while the German envoy was at a loss for words because he also had no knowledge of Chancellor Schluss. He might have smiled during a less momentous occasion but composed himself to defuse a misunderstanding that was turning nasty. "Schluss," he explained, "is not the new chancellor. He is neither a congressman nor any kind of politician. 'Schluss' is simply a German word meaning 'period.' " In fact the telegram sent was sent anonymously by someone who dictated the "period" to signify the end of the message. That was People's Commissar Ebert, who was no chancellor. Berlin was without a chancellor, a secretary of state and an emperor. A terrorist rabble had occupied government buildings by force in total illegality. Peace had started with a fraud. The telegram agreeing to Allied conditions was in the name of non-existent chancellor and was therefore legally worthless.

The Allies were concerned over the situation in Germany. The Marxist revolution could easily spread to Belgium and France. Indeed, Lenin had planned to use Germany as his base for communizing the world. The armistice treaty was drafted to punish Germany to the utmost and quench the Allies' thirst for vengeance, but its immediate result was to save Communism and make it into a force strong enough to threaten the world. The treaty ordered the Germans to withdraw immediately from the Baltic states, Ukraine and Crimea. The German presence had kept the Communist virus bottled up in Petrograd. The removal of German troops would open the way for Lenin to invade these countries. Self-interest alone would have dictated that the Allies use the Germans as a bulwark against the Red tide, but they were so overwhelmed by hatred for Germany they had become blind to the consequences of their action.

The armistice was in fact removing practically all of Germany's defense means: 5,000 cannon, 3,000 trench mortars, 25,000 machine guns had to be surrendered. In addition, the Allies confiscated 5,000 locomotives and 150,000 railroad cars, as well as the entire German air force and navy. Three million German soldiers suffering from exhaustion and years of privation had to make their way home on foot. It was an inhuman ordeal. Meanwhile, gangs of Jewish Communists were unleashing a reign of terror in every city of Germany. The bourgeoisie, paralyzed with fear, was hiding in its cellars. Erzberger was still hoping that the Allies would eventually come to their senses by the time of ratifying the peace treaty. He was also encouraged that the armistice had been concluded

only after the acceptance by all parties of Wilson's Fourteen points-guaranteeing a just peace. Would this undertaking be respected? European apprehension in the face of the Bolshevik Revolution should have induced wisdom. But it was not to be. Clemenceau was after blood when he stated: "The day of vengeance has arrived. Germany will wait in vain for us to hesitate one minute." How did Clemenceau reconcile his statements with his country's acceptance of Wilson's Fourteen Points: "There will be no annexations, no reparations or indemnities of a punitive nature"?

Chapter 45

British Demagoguery

Strangely enough the ones who, even before the arrival of delegates to the peace conference in Paris, were the spokesmen for a policy of vengeance were not the French but the British Establishment. More than any other country, Britain had taken great care to ensure that the war would prove profitable to its trade and imperialism. The British Establishment would allow nothing to stand in the way of its greed for gain. In 1914 the British empire owned a quarter of the world. To ensure Versailles would not upset its institutionalized policy of pillage and piracy, the British imperialists had, ahead of the event, stuck clever stickers on the spoils of the German and Turkish colonial empires. Of particular interest were the Middle East oil fields and German possessions in Africa. London needed Tanganyika, an African region of great strategic and economic importance for them, to link its northern colonies of Egypt and Sudan to its southern Africa lands, which they had fairly recently stolen from the Boers. Long before the armistice, the British had appropriated for themselves the German colonial empire as if by divine right. The British empire now controlled 35,467,656 square kilometers of the Earth's surface, 10 times more than it did in the 18th century. It had also acquired what it had striven for for three centuries: dominion of the seas. The British simply confiscated the entire German navy and merchant marine. All the German ships had been taken to England at the base of Scapa Flow and were to be distributed among the victors, who by Armistice Day included most of the world's countries. The distribution was typically British: 70070 of the ships would go to Britain and the balance to the rest of the world. The war had also well served the British policy of "divide and rule" by which Britain reserved the right to foment unrest and wars in Europe. It has always been an article of faith for the British Establishment to stop any European country from becoming too strong commercially or otherwise. Germany had been a prime target of this policy because its ships threatened to compete with British cartels and monopolies. Germany was earmarked for destruction only because it was successful. It joined a long list of countries which at one time or another over the years found themselves embroiled in wars and

conflict against nations backed by Britain.

The British Establishment had seen them as a threat, real or imagined, and had immediately set their agencies in motion to deal with the problem by fomenting wars. Britain had always regarded Europe as a patchwork of alien entities to be manipulated for the greater glory and wealth of the British Establishment and had never considered itself as part of Europe. "England is only bound to Europe but it is not part of it," declared Churchill. British support for one country doing its bidding was never longstanding. As soon as it had served its purpose it was abruptly discarded. Friendship or loyalty were never a consideration. Lord Palmerston clearly explained British policy: "Great Britain has no lasting friendship or enmity with anyone; it has only permanent interests." Even Clemenceau remarked: Great Britain has never ceased to be an island defended by the sea. Because of this it deems it necessary to multiply the causes of discord among the people of the continent, to ensure the peace of its conquests. Considerable means were put at the disposal of this policy. Britain's European policy has mostly consisted in keeping the people of Europe in check: using some to check the others. On Armistice Day Britain had once more reached its goal: it had eliminated its competitor by foul play.

Spain in it heyday had suffered a similar fate. Spanish ships had opened up the New World, watched by a jaundiced Britsh eye. Instead of exploring new worlds themselves, the British unleashed a fleet of pirates on the unsuspecting Spaniards. Pirates who stole the most gold, murdered the most Spaniards and sunk the most galLéons were automatically knighted by her Britannic Majesty, and cut in on a percentage of the booty. For 200 years the British Establishment lived off the proceeds of their piracy against Spain. NapoLéonic France was also under constant British attack for its attempt to unify Europe. The British had favored NapoLéon as a revolutionary tearing France apart but when he became emperor he had to go: a strong France could not be tolerated. During the entire 19th century Europe was kept in a constant state of turmoil and wars, of which the only beneficiary was British imperialism. November 11, 1918 marked the downfall of Germany, the 1914 trade competitor of Great Britain. The British were quite vocal in demanding reparations from a prostrate Germany, perhaps to deflect attention from the fact they had already helped themselves to the lion's share of German assets. Yet the British were not through with Germany. She was going to be used to fuel the mills of British politics.

Lloyd George was facing elections and he decided to ride the wave of enthusiasm created by the Allied victory over Germany. The British voters had for the last four years been subjected to an orgy of anti-German propaganda and Lloyd George thought the war hysteria had been squeezed for all it was worth. He would appeal to the voters on the benefits his government had got out of the war. Britain had already destroyed Germany and he saw no point and certainly no profits in kicking a dead horse

The British Establishment was at that time eyeing France as the next competitor to be knocked down. The French had lost almost 2 million men during the war

and they were thirsting for vengeance and reparations. The war had been fought on their territory and they felt entitled to the lion's share. Since the British lion had already taken care of that, Lloyd George felt the French would prove obnoxious upon waking up to find out there was nothing left to squeeze out of Germany. They might even turn against the British with the rage of a cheated partner. Furthermore, since the French government had firmly implanted in its subjects the notion that France was responsible for winning the war, the issue of vengeance and reparations became an emotionally-charged national issue beyond the scrutiny of knowledge or reason. Churchill was instructed to meet with Lloyd George in order to develop some kind of bipartisan policy to deal with likely French expectations and recriminations. The Establishment even contemplated helping Germany to recover enough to create a counterweight to the French. On April 11, Churchill dined with Lloyd George at 10 Downing Street. Churchill narrated the event: We were along in the main hall under the gaze of Pitt, Fox and Nelson. The greatness and magnitude of our victory produced in us a feeling of lightness and detachment. Yet our task was in no way terminated. My mind was shared between apprehension for the future and a desire to help a defeated enemy. We went on talking about the great qualities of the German people, of the terrible struggle they had to bear against three-quarters of the world, of the impossibility of remaking Europe without German participation. We thought at the time they were actually dying of starvation. We thought famine and defeat would slide the Teutonic population into the deadly abyss that had already devoured Russia. I suggested we should, without waiting for any more news, send to Hamburg half a dozen ships filled with food. Although the armistice conditions were not to lift the blockade until peace had been signed, the Allies had promised to provide sufficient food and the prime minister look upon my proposition favorably. Outside, the songs and the hurrahs of the crowd were reaching our ears, like waves on the shore. But sentiments of a differenct nature would soon prevail.

Churchill and Lloyd George waxed pompous on helping the hungry in the comfortable club atmosphere of Downing Street. These were noble thoughts which, however, were not meant for public consumption but rather to be dissipated in the fumes of after-diner cigars. Outside, the world of electioneering and politicking had little time for highmindedness. A week after the dinner, Lloyd George was won over to the idea of whipping up more anti-German hysteria as the best way to win the election. British master propagandists had demonstrated how effective their anti-German lies could be both at home and abroad. For a politician like Lloyd George it was nothing to change issues or policy. In August, 1914 he was a staunch opponent of the war. Then he changed his mind in exchange for a cabinet post. Three years later had had become prime minister of the pro- war party. Anti-Germanism was a proven recipe for winning elections and Lloyd George fully intended to use it. With a certain black humor Churchill commented: "The war of the giants had ended; the bickering of pygmies has started." (*World Crisis*, Vol. 4, p. 27.) British propaganda had portrayed Kaiser Wilhelm II as an absolute monster who, alone, had wanted the war.

The Kaiser bugbear, Hun horror tales about atrocities and dastardly sinkings of "innocent civilian ships" such as the Lusitania has been most profitable for British politicians. They were once more waved in the face of the crowds. The voters had been well conditioned for four years and responded enthusiastically by sweeping Lloyd George and his coalition government for another term.

The British Establishment thought it unwise to switch hate hysteria from the Germans to the French too abruptly. Although it had the utmost confidence in the voters' proverbial lack of memory, it realized the electorate had actually become addicted to anti-German hysteria. The crowd demanded that the Kaiser and his Huns, who had allegedly multilated Belgian children and shot Red Cross nurses, and killed British subject should be hanged, and Hunland pay forever for their ghastliness. A police report at the time read: "The same sentiments dominate in all classes ... The Germans must pay for the damages they have caused with their last cent, even if they have to pay for a thousand years." Cabinet Minister Barnes was cheered by the crowds when he cried out routinely: "The Kaiser must hang." Lloyd George was equally vehement and promised: "The emperor of Germany will be judged and eventually put to death."

Churchill had long since jettisoned his temporary magnanimity and had joined the bloodthirsty pack in demanding that the Kaiser be put on trial and hanged. Even that did not satisfy the voters, who insisted that "a punishment worse than death be guaranteed. Churchill noted: "Women displayed the most violence. All the classes and all the parties in the town of Dundee demanded the Kaiser's hanging. I was obliged to demand he be brought to justice."

Hanging the Kaiser and bleeding Germany white might have made the British electorate delirious but it did not make economic sense. The use of free German labor would only increase unemployement at home and would also deprive Germany of money to pay its enormous war debt. It was really a matter of trying to pluck a plucked chicken. After the elections politicians soon forgot, privately at least, all their blood-curdling promises and went back to the business of money. Lloyd George commissioned British economist John Maynard Keynes who came up with a maximum figure of 2 billion pounds sterling for reparation. There was such an outcry-the amount was deemed to be far too low-that the commission's recommendations were quickly swept into the dust bin.

Churchill still tried to convince his constituents of Dundee that the figure of 2 billion pounds sterling "was reasonable and sensible." He carefully addressed the voters:

The Germans must pay reparations [applause]; they must pay large reparation [applause]. In 1870 they demanded large reparations from France. We will make them pay 10 times more [long applause]. Two hundred million pounds, that is to say 5 billion gold francs multiplied by 10; that makes 2 billion pounds.

Churchill had thought he had sold the voters but soon realized no one had bought his argument:

The next day they started taking a close look at my figures. An arrogant telegram was sent to me from an important chamber of commerce: "Haven't you forgotten a zero?" The local newspapers were stridently screaming 12 billion, 15 billion! These figures were flying off the lips of men and women who, only yesterday, were satisfied with 2 billion. Overwhelmed, Churchill beat a hasty retreat: "Well, naturally, if we can get more ..."

Lloyd George knew the insanity of such demands but he was not going to be outdone on the hustings, where he repeated the famous statement: "We will squeeze the German lemon until the pips squeak." He raised the figure to 24 billion pounds sterling, 12 times more than he had been advised by economic experts Germany could possibly pay. "Yes," he proclaimed before a delirious crown, "they will pay this to the last cent, even if we have to search their pockets." In 1918 German pockets were more likely to be filled with holes than cents. But the inflationary rhetoric had propelled Lloyd George and his coalition to a landslide victory with 83% of the seats in the House of Commons. His prime ministership was secured for several more years. Churchill made another political somersault, jumped on Lloyd George's bandwagon and was minister for war.

The triumph of demagoguery in Britain ensured the failure of the Versailles Conference. No British minister was about to lower the figure. It was accepted dogma, not only believed by the English population, but also unanimously by the French. Lloyd George tried to shed his electoral promises the following month and on many later occasions, but always without success. He was stuck with them for better or worse.

Chapter 46

The Morass of Paris

Lloyd George arrived in Paris at the beginning of January, 1919, flanked by a retinue of emirs, maharajahs and prime ministers from Canada, New Zealand, Australia and all the other far-flung outposts of the British empire. Clemenceau suspected "perfidious Albion" had once more doublecrossed the French, and said as much to Lloyd George: "The very next day after the armistice I have found you to be the enemy of France." Lloyd George replied: "Well, isn't it our traditional policy?" The altercation reflected British policy without embellishment. France had replaced Germany as the enemy.

Although Clemenceau was able to establish that Britain was the enemy, he was unable to see that only a reconciliation with Germany prevented him from developing such a thought. This ignorance was shared by many of his compatriots and was always cleverly exploited by the British Establishment. Before 1914 most Frenchmen lived in total ignorance of all their neighbors. They traveled little because they were satisfied no country could match their own. The famous author Charles Maurras had only once in his lifetime left France, and that was to take, as a young man, a short train trip to Brussels. Pierre Laval, a Cabinet minister 11 times, told me he had also been in Belgium by train: "But I did not see anything because my train was going to Berlin where I had been invited by Streseman, and it was dark." Clemenceau knew so little about anything foreign he could not distinguish between Dutch and Belgian currency. This could be understandable coming from overseas visitors, but France had lived next to these "foreigners" for more than 2,000 years.

Thus was post-war Europe poisoned by British perfidy and French hatred and ignorance. Petty squabbles were the order of the day.

It was such an environment that Wilson would reach Paris on January 14, 1918. He bore his hallowed Fourteen Points as if he had come down from Sinai with them. He was sure they would illuminate the world. He was quite prophet-like about it. For Clemenceau the Fourteen Points were just so much airy nonsense.

He would not say so publicly, however, and instead set out the welcome mat for Wilson. He organized a favorable press and arranged for French academician Lavedan to write:

We saw him in Illustration [a famous magazine], we have admired him and our descendants will admire him. President Wilson will appear in the poetry of the coming centuries like Dante, whom he resembles in profile. The future generations will see him leading, between the perils of this infernal world, the Beatrice dressed in white which we call peace. We salute in our hearts, in the temple of our gatitude, this eternally memorable man. Hail President Wilson, high priest of idealism.

Left-wing author Romain Roland was not about to be outpuffed and threw in his own lofty encomium: Heir to Washington and Abraham Lincoln: convoke the Congress of Humanity! Be the arbiter of all free people! And may the future generations call thee the Reconciliator!

While incense was lavishly dispensed Clemenceau was preparing to neutralize Wilson's points. Like the British, he had come to resent American success. There was plain jealousy and also a feeling that American growth would create a new center of power. Both the British and Clemenceau believed that their respective countries should be the center of the world and disliked the idea of a new contender. Allied anti-Americanism was really scandalous. The Entente had railroaded America into a war that was none of her business. The wheat and steel the "Allies" had received from America saved them from defeat, and American soldiers saved them from annihilation.

The "Allies" often charged that the United States was obsessed with business, and undoubtedly American business had benefited from the war. But after all, businessmen are out to seize opportunities and to make a profit. No one had forced the "Allies" to buy from America. The Germans would have jumped at the chance had they not been blockaded. Clemenceau wrote: "America, for a relatively small loss of lives, would materially benefit at our expense out of all proportions" (Greatness and Misery, p. 158). In comparison to French or German losses it may have been small, but it was 100,000 American men, dead in a war of no concern to them. Clemenceau also resented the fact he had been helped. It was a matter pride; he would have liked to have won the war all by himself. Apart from matters of pride, ignorance and ingratitude there was also a fundamental difference of ideology. Clemenceau's ideas of self-determination had little to do with Wilson's Fourteen Points: "We must have the courage to say it: we did not go into war with a program of liberators," he said. Before reaching Europe, Wilson had let known his misgivings to his associates: "The men with whom we are going to negotiate do not represent the opinion of their people." In fact few of the Versailles conventioneers represented their own people. The latest Senate elections were a virtual denial of the Americans' previous mandate for Wilson. Clemenceau would, within a few months, be trounced in the French presidential election. Venizelos had been thrown out by his Greek people. Erzberger, the unfortunate German signatory of the armistice,

would be assassinated, a victim of German outrage. The British were continuing their "divide and rule" policy. The French, blinded by their hatred of Germany, were locked in obscurantist policies. The Germans were treated as pariahs. And there was in addition a horde of "creditor nations" who had hopped on the war bandwagon against Germany at the last minute and demanded their share of the spoils. Versailles was a hornets's nest of quarrelsom and conniving mediocrities. Clemenceau called it "a peace full of treacheries just like the ambushes of war." Churchill called it "a squabble of pygmies," and at least on this matter both were right.

Chapter 47

The Soviets in Germany

While 27 Allied countries sent their delegates to swell the ranks of the "treacherous squabblers" at Versailles, Germany was sinking into chaos. Soviet commissars had established a reign of terror across Germany. Bavaria had been taken over by a bloodthirsty Communist just out of jail. He was a Jew from Galicia who had turned professional agitator for the Soviets. His hair and beard were solid with grime because he never washed. His skin was waxy, like death, and he always wore an oily beanie which appeared fused to his skull. His name was Kurt Eisner. "He was," wrote the French historian Benoist-Méchin, "one of those hybrid figures that history seems to produce during periods of chaos and political mayhem." (History of the German Army, Vol. I, p. 270.) Paul Gentizon, the French author who witnessed the Bolshevik terror in Munich, said: "Eisner was like an Oriental warlock." Eisner had been involved with the theater business and was adept in theatrics. He had somehow developed an attention-catching oratory, both strident and nebulous. On November 7, 1918, a meeting organized by the socialists massed more than 100,000 people to celebrate the revolutionary exploits in Kiel, Hamburg and Lubeck. Nothing more than an outpouring of speeches was on the agenda. Eisner appeared suddenly, backed by a vociferous group. He was hoisted on the speakers' platform and burst out into violent tirades. The crowd, who had endured four years of hunger and suffering, responded to Eisner's rhetoric. He whipped them up into a frenzy and led them into the streets, with the help of trained professional agitators. Within hours the Marxist-led mob had taken control of all government buildings, railway stations, post offices and factories. Munich had fallen. It was an incredible event. While Germany was heroically holding out against the combined Allied and American onslaught, a Jew (and convicted criminal) from Galicia was sitting on the throne inside the royal palace of Bavaria. On the same evening of November 7, 1918, he declared a "republic," and unleashed his commissars to "mete out justice." Fearing for his life, King Ludwig III fled with his family, in the nick of time. Thus one of the most Christian and traditional states in Germany had been overthrown in the course of a single night by an alien thug.

Eisner appointed fellow Jews as ministers. A fanatical Communist called Erich Mühsam, the Jewish commissar of the Red Guards, declared Munich under "the dictatorship of the proletariat." Eisner put him in charge of state security. The dictatorship's first act was to "break diplomatic relations" with Berlin. Eisner then proclaimed Germany's guilt in the war and proceeded to send the Allies documents "establishing the culpability of the Reich." The so-called documents were out-and-out forgeries invented by Eisner and his cohorts. He then called on the Allies to accept his "loyal oath and repentance." While Munich was reeling under the terror of the sudden coup, the Bavarian heartland had become horrified. Within a few days Bavarians both in and outside Munich had composed themselves and begun to fight back against the invaders. A huge crowd assembled near the palace occupied by Eisner, to the cries of: "Down with Eisner, demon of Israel! Down with Eisner, Judah's murderous clown! Eisner to the gallows! We want Bavarians to run Bavaria! Bavaria for the Bavarians!" Eisner dismissed the demonstration as the work of "extremists" and convened immediate elections to legitimize his coup. By then the Bavarians had lost their fears of the armed commissars and voted massively against the Eisner regime: in a 180-seat congress, 177 anti-Eisner congressmen were elected. Eisner dismissed the results. Six days later, a lieutenant in the defeated German army shot him in the face, point blank. Mühsam succeeded Eisner and called upon Communist agitators from Augsburg, Fürth, Würzburg, and Lindau, to rush to the rescue. Mühsam was determined to impose Communism ruthlessly by force of arms, against the wish of the overwhelming majority of Bavarians.

* * *

The Marxist "republic" poured out edicts: "all previous laws are invalid Workers will work when they want . . . History is the enemy of civilization, and teaching it, is forever abolished." The commissar for foreign affairs sent a telegram to Pope Benedict XV complaining that the former foreign minister of Bavaria "had fled to Bamberg after having stolen the keys of the ministry's bathrooms." He also informed the pope that Berlin minister Noske was "a gorilla" concluded the telegram: "We want eternal peace."

Communications among fellow Marxist ministers were no more sane. The foreign minister informed the transport minister in another telegram: "My dear colleague, I have declared war against Württemberg and Switzerland because these pigs did not send me 60 locomotives. I am sure of victory. I know the pope personally and I'll get him to bless our arms." The era of the insane and the exalted was soon to be replaced by steely- eyed Marxist-Leninist bureaucrats. They had not been sprung out from jail or an insane asylum but had been sent to Bavaria directly from Petrograd by Lenin's International. Lenin had set his mind to have direct control of Bavaria which was just next door to Allied territories-his gateways to Western Europe. Lenin sent three of his most murderous commissars to take control of the Bavarian Red army: the Jews Levine', Levien and Axelrod, who had earned their stripes in mass terror under

Bronstein-Trotsky. They immediately decreed: "The days of ideology are over. We now have martial law. The firing squad is taking the place of speeches." Opponents and alleged opponents of the trio were rounded up and summarily shot to death. Whole massacres of hundreds of people at a time were common in the streets of Munich. While the murder of defenseless civilians was carried out in Bavaria, the delegates at the Paris Peace Conference had their first meeting. Far from being horrified at such massacres, the Allies could not contain their glee. The Bavarian bloodbath was a gift from the gods, which meant that Germany would be split and more Germans would be killed. Allied diplomatic envoys were rushed to Munich to kowtow to the bloodthirsty trio. They offered food and money to bolster their opposition to Berlin. Although the war had ended, Germany was still under Allied blockade, which was ruthlessly enforced. The first state of Germany to benefit from a lifting of the blockade would be Communist-controlled Bavaria.

* * *

Everywhere in Germany Lenin's agents spread death and destruction. The Bolshevik agents would complete the Allied blockade by paralyzing international food supplies with sabotage and strikes. The Bolsheviks had closed down the Ruhr coal mines and people had little heat during the winter of 1918 to 1919. Thousands of children died of starvation. Lenin thought a starving people would provide good revolutionary recruits for the final Communist assault on Berlin. Regiments from the German army reached Berlin on December 11, 1918. In accordance with his function as the new president of Germany, Socialist Friedrich Ebert was at the Brandenburg Gate to greet them: "I salute You-you whom no enemy has beaten on the battlefield." These were the survivors who had left 2 million of their comrades on the battlefront.

Their features are drawn and their eyes reflect an awful exhaustion," wrote French historian Benoist-Méchin. "They have polished their boots and belts, but it is like a funeral march. The old steel helmets are decorated with oak leaves. The Uhlan cavalry musicians intoned, with Wagnerian splendor, Deutschland über Alles. But the heroes knew, despite their day of recognition, that they were coming home to a country that had been torn apart by sabotage and revolutions.

On November 9, 1918, the socialist leader Philip Scheidemann had proclaimed Germany a "republic." At the same time, he launched what he called the "Republic of the Soviets." Scheidemann and the more radical elements in the Socialist Party decided to join the Marxist gangs who were beating up people in the streets and had occupied all of the city's newspaper offices. Many returned soldiers were set upon and viciously mugged; their medals and stripes were ripped off their uniforms. Wounded men were trampled to the ground and kicked by Communist thugs who had never been at the front. Although Scheidemann admitted "It was not a nice sight," he decided to form a coalition between "moderate and extremist" socialists, which was named "the Council of the People's Commissars." Scheidemann would later explain, "The revolution was inevitable and it was necessary to lead it in order to avoid complete

anarchy" (The Collapse, p. 232).

The Council of the Peoples' Commissars consisted of three "moderates" (Ebert, Scheidemann and Landsberg) and three "radicals" (Haase, Dittmann and Barth). On November 9, 1918 they were ensconced in Bismarck's former dining room at the Wilhelmstrasse. Scheidemann himself described how Berlin had fallen prey to Soviet mobocracy:

Every morning Karl Liebknecht gathered his troops in the Siegesallee. The focusing point was the statue of Emperor Otto the Lazy. The principle was to create constant disorder, to keep "Hell" in motion, and above all fill the streets with the unemployed. I remember one Sunday evening in November. It was raining. Ebert and I were working with War Minister Scheüch. We were told a crowd of demonstrators was approaching. We had the gates closed and all the lights in the front rooms switched off. The crowd was approaching in the dark with red flags and inflammatory placards. They screamed over and over: "Down with Ebert-Scheidemann! Heil Liebknecht!"

The Wilhelmplatz was getting filled with a huge crowd pressing against the gates. We stood still in an unlit room. Gradually things quieted down. Liebknecht climbed on top of a car and addressed the crowd with monotonous and repetitive slogans. He was drunk with his power and the number of people listening to him. He was giving vent to the worst incitements: "The traitors are right in there, the Scheidemanns, the social-patriots. We could storm their lair right now ... !" This triggered a roar of approval. Then a band of highly excited soldiers forced their way into the council room. They said they were talking on behalf of Berlin's 30 garrison units. In the midst of tumult and screams they shouted out their demands. It appeared later that these people did not represent anybody because none of the units mentioned had any knowledge of them. Liebknecht kept making speeches. Naturally, I was the recipient of the worst insults. They called me a traitor, and extremist, a lackey, a thief, a fraud. It was like sitting on dynamite. We worked day and night to the screams of demonstrators. We were besieged and hardly defended ... As far as setting a foot in the streets, no one would even think of it.

Meanwhile, a newly formed group called "the council of the deserters" was joining the Communists. There was a lot of talk among the radical left about emulating our Russian comrades, who were the first to have flown the flag of freedom." (Scheidemann, Collapse, p. 254.) The "People's Commissars Council" had been given the "press commissariat" only to find out all the press rooms had been invaded by rioters who were indeed emulating their Soviet comrades. Scheidemann became very frightened at what was going on in the Socialist-Communist government during November and December, 1918: "The Reich, and Berlin in particular, was like a mental asylum." (Scheidemann, Collapse, p. 235.)

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The asylum did contain many criminally insane individuals: Liebknecht and Luxemburg belonged in that category. They exploited the misery and panic of

a people both out of work and starving, for their own fanatical purposes. The duo incited an extraordinary revolutionary ferment. They poured oil on the fire because it served their interests. Luxemburg feared the return of the soldiers from the front. They represented a disciplined force still led by patriotic officers. She was right. The soldiers who had fought four long years for their country's honor were shocked and sickened at the sight of the Marxist pandemonium confronting their eyes and ears. To neutralize any possible reaction Liebknecht and Luxemburg ordered the Spartacists, as the Communists in Germany called themselves at the time, to form 14 battalions with a thousand men each. They would wear red armbands and would control the streets.

Navy mutineers were organized in a division of the "Volksmarine," which made the imperial palace their headquarters. They also occupied the Reichsbank and the Prussian parliament. The third formation was the "Sicherheitswache," the secret police in charge of all intelligence and the enforcement of the revolution. Liebknecht took control of the three armed groups. To control congress he created his own parliamentary police, the Republikanische Schutztruppe, which wore red-and-black armbands. Lenin had explained his plan succinctly: "We now see clearly how the revolution will progress: the Germans, the French, the British will do the work and socialism will triumph."

Ebert was more the hostage than the ally of the Leninists. Spies tailed him everywhere. His correspondence was read or stolen and his telephone lines were tapped. Ebert finally realized he could be liquidated at any time. Although both Ebert and Scheidemann were men of the left they somehow remained patriotic. They felt now their only chance of survival was the army, or what was left of it after they had undermined it with their Socialist-Communist coalition. Ebert was kept isolated from everyone, but a telephone line almost saved him. Unknown to the Leninists there was in Ebert's office a secret line linking, since 1914, the chancery to the German High Command. Ebert managed to contact Marshal von Hindenburg in Kassel, at his headquarters in the historic castle where NapoLéon's brother Jerome once reigned over Westphalia. The flimsy wire linking Berlin to Kassel would decide the fate of Berlin and Germany.

The first contact was far from friendly. Hindenburg had little time for Ebert, whom he considered a frightened captive of the extemists. Although Ebert needed the army's help, he was fearful of a military dictatorship. He wanted to use the army to eliminate the extreme left but not the "moderate" left. After asking for help Ebert lost his nerve and canceled his request. The Bolsheviks were not quite ready to grab total power. In the beginning of December, 1918 their militias were well-armed but badly commanded. They needed another month to bring their troops to combat readiness. Hindenburg on the other hand was watching his troops fall apart. The men were tired and wanted to go home. Many did-without authorization. As the barracks emptied the Communists moved in to seize weapons and equipment. Hindenburg knew if he wanted to act he would have to move immediately.

"The Spartacists," wrote Benoist-Mechin, "felt they were gaining ground. A

few more days and they would be the masters of Germany" (*Armée allemande*, vol. I, p. 82).

The Spartacists sought mastery of Germany but Lenin was their master. Scheidemann, who had been playing both sides to save his skin, nevertheless would accuse his coalition partners of being on the payroll of Lenin. This was proven by the famous radio message of Soviet Ambassador Joffe in Germany. The message was a lengthy accounting of funds received by the Communist Jew to provoke the revolution in Germany. It read: "Soldiers and sailors, keep your arms. Otherwise the capitalists will soon disperse you. Conquer the real power, gun in hand and form a government of workers, soldiers and sailors with Liebknecht as leader." Thus a foreign power was already trying to impose its puppets on the German people. The Spartacists were becoming more insolent by the day. On December 16 they demanded that Hindenburg be fired. On December 17 they summoned the soldiers' council to a meeting and organized a vote decreeing: "The supreme command of the army and navy will be entrusted to people's commissars and to the Central Committee." "All insignia of rank will be abolished." "The soldiers themselves will designate their officers." Officers were discharged and disarmed and often set upon physically by Leibknecht's thugs. At his headquarters Hindenburg was outraged: "I will never accept that the insignia I have worn since I joined the army be torn from my uniform. I do not accept this decision which concerns the right of command among career officers. I recognize this decree as totally illegal, apart from usurping the decision-making process from the national Assembly." Ebert managed to convince his coalition partners to postpone their decrees until the January 19, 1919 legislative elections. He convinced them that the implementation of such measures could provoke a far stronger reaction than expected. In two months Hindenburg had seen the frightened Ebert change his position at least 20 times. At the beginning of the war Ebert had said, on August 4, 1914: "This is the most beautiful day in my life." Ebert switched issues and policies according to whomever he spoke with last. He was basically honest but his essential lack of courage inclined him to manipulate and be minipulated. Hindenburg and his right-hand man, General Groner, no longer believed In him. To them only the army could still stop Communism. Like Julius Caesar, Hindenburg decided to cross the Rubicon, in this instance the Spree.

On December 20, 1918 General Groner went to Berlin, accompanied by Major Schleicher, who would in 1932, be the last chancellor of the Weimar Republic. Schleicher was an intelligent soldier but strong-willed and abrupt. Groner was a superb organizer who had just accomplished the flawless repatriation of all the German armies from the front. Without any real power to back them up except their courage, they went to confront the revolutionary council. Ebert, at least for the moment, was won over by the courageous soldiers. Lenin's agents became hysterical at the sight and ran to the streets screaming for the masses to arm themselves. The naval revolutionaries rushed to the chancery and cordoned off all accesses. Ebert was trapped like a rat. "We were there without a single armed man to help us and without any means to oppose rampant thuggery,"

Ebert said.

Ebert was lost. Once more he used his direct and secret telephone line to the High Command. "The government is imprisoned," he whispered, his mouth close to the receiver. "You have always told me that if it ever came to that you would come to our help. The moment has come." The response from High Command was swift: "We will immediately march from Potsdam to free you." The situation was deteriorating rapidly in Berlin. The chief of police, Eichhorn, was on the payroll of Rosta, the Soviet information office. He had taken army headquarters with the help of armed navy deserters. He captured the Commanding Officer Wels and two of his assistants and had his Red guards beat them up savagely. Eichhorn informed them they would be put to death if Ebert made the slighest move. The Communists thought they had Berlin well in hand and relaxed their blockade of the chancery. Ebert breathed a sigh of relief and the eternal turncoat rushed to his secret telephone to ask Hindenburg to stop his troops marching any further. "The marshal and I have reached the end of our patience," General Groner answered. "You are destroying the morale of Germany's last loyal troops." Ebert had cried wolf so many times he had now lost all credibility, and the German army continued its march to Berlin. Three months before, the German army had been 4 million men strong. On December 23, 1918 the German army, on its way to wrest Berlin from the Bolsheviks, was only a handful of loyal patriots, 800 in all. The deserters and mutineers under Communist control manning Berlin's fortifications were supported by tens of thousands of armed Bolsheviks. General Otto Wels was held captive and was expected to be murdered at any moment. "Weis," wrote Scheidemann, "was still held prisoner in a cellar below the castle's stables. Radke, the head of the sailors, announced in the evening he would no longer answer for Otto Wel's life. They were now trying to occupy the Vowärts printing plant. We could not just abandon Wels." In the dawn of Christmas, 1918, the German troops bombarded the palace occupied by the Bosheviks. A wall collapsed on them and the palace war stormed. At 9:30 in the morning the Bolsheviks were flying a white flag, ready to surrender. They asked to start capitulation talks. While the regular troops were talking, armed Bolsheviks encircled the palace. Suddenly they attacked in consecutive human waves. It was a massacre. Only a few survivors managed to escape death and torture.

Christmas night was horrible. Liebknecht and Luxemburg went on a rampage of killing, looking everywhere for German soldiers. Eichhorn had become the warlord of north Berlin. The socialists could no longer address the crowds. Their Communist partners had seized their newspaper, Vorwärts, and occupied their press and editorial offices. "A Vorwärts edition had been printed by another printer. It was seized by the rioters at gunpont and all the newspapers thrown in the Spree River." (Scheidemann, Collapse, p. 260). "The revolutionaries," wrote Benoist-Méchin, "are triumphing everywhere. The red flag flies over all the major buildings in Berlin. December 24, 1918 marks the highest phase of their power." From now on Berlin was totally under the control of the Communist terrorists.

At every street corner Spartacists had placed machingunners. The crackling of bullets and the explosion of grenades could be heard constantly. Then the shots subsided. A group of demonstrators were marching by waving placards and an officer's coat dripping with blood. Firing resumed after the demonstration had passed. The socialists were trapped. They could not leave the chancery for fear of being lynched. They could not communicate with any one in the country because the post office, the railways and telegraph stations were now in the hands of the Red councils. They could not even address the Berlin population because their newspapers and printing plants had been taken by storm. (Benoist-Méchin, Armée allemande, p. 102.) Liebknecht came to taunt the socialist ministers outside their closed windows: "We could choke them in their den." The Rote Fahne newspaper, organ of the Spartacists, published in one of its street reports:

The proletarians were massed elbow to elbow. Their multitude pushed as far as the Tiergarten. They had brought their arms, they waved their red flags, they were ready for anything. They waited at Alexanderplatz with guns, heavy and light machine guns. The sailors were guarding every passageway in Berlin. Public buildings were full of soldiers, sailors and workers. The highest authorities were now at the mercy of the revolutionaries. (Scheidemann, *Collapse*, p. 255)

Chapter 48

Populist Noske Takes on Communism

Lenin had an implacable will and a genius for organization. He was a man of ideas and a man of action. That was the reason he had won in Petrograd. The situation in Berlin of December, 1918 was similar to that in Petrograd, but the leadership was different. The German Bolsheviks had power within their grasp but they had wallowed too much in rhetoric. When it came time to impose their will, they had procrastinated. The way was wide open. Their enemies had been defeated, just like the troops of Hindenburg, in the streets of Berlin. The crowds were waiting in the streets for more orders. Lenin had in one night, in far more difficult circumstances, swept everything before him. But Liebknecht did not secure his power. He talked for hours and hours and then the entire night. The crowd was ready to die for the revolution but as Liebknecht droned on people became groggy with words and went home. Rote Fahne commented on the failed revolution two weeks later:

The masses were waiting in the cold and fog since nine in the morning. The leaders were somewhere talking; no one knew where. The fog was getting thicker and the masses kept waiting. By noon the masses were cold, hungry and impatient: they wanted an act or at least an explanation to make their waiting more bearable. But nothing came because the leaders were still talking. The fog became thicker and night started to fall. Sadly the men went home. They had wanted great things to happen but they had got nowhere because the leaders kept talking ... They kept talking through the evening, and all night until dawn. Once more the crowd gathered along the Siegesallee but the leaders deliberated again. They talked and talked and talked.

In politics those who do not act in time are supplanted by swifter competitors. While the Berlin Leninists talked, a strong man emerged. He was not a haughty military type, nor a rich bourgeois, nor an academic, but a robust proletarian.

He had the will of an elemental being and was motivated by a strong social patriotism, which at the time was the basic behavior of all honest Germans. While the frightened socialists did not even dare switch on their office lights a former wood-cutter from Brandenburg with huge hands and a powerful frame came to tackle and master everything. His name was Gustav Noske.

Ebert suddenly remembered Noske as a colossus who had been a socialist deputy in 1914, elected by the coal miners of Chemnitz. He had distinguished himself during the war as a brave soldier. His officers had been impressed by his intuitive intelligence and his strength of character. Noske had also been impressed by the German officers who led their men into battle, often dying in the process. He felt a deep admiration for them and stood ready to take up their fallen arms. Ebert had been informed that Noske had shown great courage and ability in quelling the Kiel mutinies. Perhaps he could do it again in Berlin, where he would confront many more mutineers, and huge crowds whipped up in a frenzy by Jewish Marxist agents. On December 24, 1918, as revolutionary agents led a mob of 200,000 against the chancery, Noske made up his mind to restore order in his own way.

Ebert asked Noske to become war minister in his nominal government. It was the worst portfolio of all and Noske knew it. He answered: "I agree. I guess someone has to be a bloodhound." While Liebknecht was wallowing in Marxist dialectics, Noske was clear and single-minded in his mission. He knew verbiage was the enemy of action and results. Jaurès, the French socialist leader and founder of the Communist newspaper Humanité, had justified the mass-slaughter of the 1789 French Revolution thus:

When the slightest hesitation or the slightest error can compromise the new order for centuries to come, the leaders of this huge undertaking did not have the time to rally dissenters and convince their opponents. They had to fight and act. In order to keep their freedom of action they had to call on death to create the immediate unanimity they needed.

Liberals, Socialists and Communists alike would call such talk "fascist," but it had been the cardinal rule and modus operandi of all left-wing operations. The revolutionaries of France in 1789 never stopped chopping people's heads off until they had eliminated all real or potential dissenters. The Paris Commune, so admired by Lenin, did exactly the same thing in 1871: the archbishop of Paris was killed by a firing squad and many other political opponents were rounded up and murdered. These two revolutions have remained, despite the documented reports of their wholesale massacres, the guiding lights of the left for the last hundred years. Noske, too, knew death was the only way to stop crazed murderers. Deliberately and calmly, he would crush the powerful and murderous Communist hordes. At the time Noske had no troops with which to fight. He had to go out and look for them: "If I wanted to do something positive to restore order in Berlin I would have to contact the soldiers very quickly and take them back in hand." It all seemed impossible. The officers had been fired on December 25, 1918, and the 4 million soldiers had gone home to

their towns and villages. Furthermore, the Communists controlled the streets and main highways and reinforced a 500-mile offensive front. A new military approach had to be devised to deal with a situation never encountered in the war manuals: an internal insurrection organized and led by alien agents and agitators. Germany would be saved by Noske's determination and also by the military genius of Colonel Maercker. Maercker was unknown at the time. He had led the 214th Artillery Division according to conventional tactics. Faced with revolution Maercker developed an entirely new form of warfare. "It was only when I came home from the front that I realized the magnitude of the disaster. I was devastated," he said. He immediately knew it would be hopeless to confront alien-led mobs with a handful of patriotic guards or a few bourgeois elements playing soldier. Only battle-tested and disciplined veterans could avoid annihilation. With Noske and Hindenburg's backing he raced against time to gather several thousand ex-soldiers who had retained their patriotism. Maercker guaranteed the men half a pound of meat per day and increased their pay fivefold. He established a new status of comradeship among officers and men which would become as important as military discipline. Troop formation and arms allocation would be related to specific objectives rather than impersonal administrative structures. The formations would be small and self-contained, under the orders of a commander ready and entitled to take whatever action was necessary. Each unit would be responsible for the implementation of its actions. It would be a human and organic organization commanded by a hierarchy of merit and valor. "A specific tactic will be taught to deal with any kind of situation: occupation of train stations, power plants or factories, protection of military depots, port facilities and public buildings, street cleaning, town sanitation or the dislodging of Communist terrorists from any emplacement." The breaking down of social castes did not mean lowering discipline. There was a strict code applying to all-part of which was the death penalty for anyone caught looting. The men could elect a council of trustees, which would receive complaints or suggestions about any aspect of any army administration and amenities. It would constitute a link between the men and the officers. Maercker's code also specified that punishment injurious to a man's honor could not be inflicted. On the other hand the men had the right to nominate any soldiers who had accomplished acts of heroism to the rank of officer.

Such a code was unheard of in those days and Maercker was relieved when Hindenburg accepted it with interest. It would lay the foundation for a new German army, made up of volunteers.

Maercker worked tirelessly under almost impossible conditions. The Communists had ransacked all the depots or sabotaged the materiel. The undersecretary for internal affairs told Maercker: "We can't help you. It's all in your hands. Do whatever you have to do, by yourself." With an iron will and relentless perseverance, Maercker combed Germany for qualified volunteers. He managed to gatner 4,000. They were properly trained and motivated and were standing by for action near Berlin at the town of Zossen. Meanwhile, Noske was not wasting his time either. On January 6, 1918, the besieged Socialist ministers

gave him emergency power as civil commander of the army. Noske immediately re-established discipline among all those around him. Although he was given dictatorial powers by decree he did not bother to read the official text. He did not believe authority could be given: it had to be taken. A natural-born leader was not chosen: he emerged out of his own strength and imposed his leadership.

Noske described Berlin on January 6, 1919:

I kept running into demonstrations, at the Brandenburg Gate, the Tiergarten, and in front of the Defense Ministry. A large number of armed men were marching with the crowd. Trucks filled with machine guns had gathered near the Victory Column. I politely asked that I be let through on the grounds that I had an urgent matter to attend to. I was let through only because the crowd was not under determined leadership. The crowd was hostile but not sufficiently organized, while its leaders kept babbling. A decisive leader among them could have easily taken Berlin by noon. In front of the chancery and the Defense Ministry the crowds were raising their fists, screaming slogans at the "warmongers." There was nothing that could be done if they had decided to storm the buildings. (Benoist-Méchin, Armée allemande, vol. I, p. 129.)

Noske selected a boarding school for girls located in the out-of-the-way district of Dahlem to become his headquarters. At three in the afternoon he requisitioned the building, known as the Luisenstift. The girls left right away to make way for the volunteers. Telephone lines were immediately installed and Noske moved a portable bed and desk into the corner of the classrrom. He notified the men of his Kiel "Iron Brigade" to rush to Berlin, and a small airforce squadron to stand by in Potsdam. He also learned from Maercker that the 4,000 volunteers were ready to move.

The odds were disproportionate. The Spartacists disposed of entire regiments formed months ago. They had placed more than 2,000 machine-gunners on rooftops, behind windows, and on street corners across Berlin, as well as 22 cannons at strategic points. The navy mutineers had accumulated a huge arsenal of arms and ammunition in the Marstall courtyard, which had become a center of distribution for all revolutionaries. Noske's only advantage was his organizational skill. He had a precise plan and capable aides. Above all he was fearless, he owed favors to no one: his power came from within. It was quality versus quantity: a hundred sheep are no match for one lion, and a thousand sparrows are no match for one eagle. Men of inner strength, regardless of how few they are, will always dominate the herd. Noske was facing crazed Communist terrorists who did not think for themselves. They were manipulated and used by alien agitators for the benefit of alien interests. He knew Lenin had won power only by murdering millions of people who did not submit to his will. Within 15 months of Lenin's rule 8'h million Russians died through massacres or state-induced starvation. Noske knew if he was to survive the Leninist onslaught he had no alternative but to use terror superior to that of the Bolsheviks and to be more ruthless than Lenin.

The Spartacists had asked the Red garrisons of Frankfurt on the Oder and Span-

dau to come to the rescue. On January 10, 1919 Noske burst onto the national scene. His volunteers stormed the Communist-occupied city hall of Spandau and captured all the Communists inside. Within minutes all of them were shot by firing squads, just as the Bolsheviks had done everywhere they had gone. Next another group of volunteers under the command of Major von Stefani approached the newspaper district of Berlin. The Sparticists had confiscated all the newspapers including the Socialist mouthpiece Vorwärts. Noske ordered his cannoneers to blast the front of the building. Part of it collapsed. The Communists rushed out, waving white handkerchiefs. They were given no quarter and were mowed down under heavy fire. Three hundred others were caught at the back. A Bolshevik counterattack allowed a few to escape; most of them were shot. Noske's men stormed western Berlin, which fell within hours. The next day Berlin was a desert. The few thousand German volunteers advanced in column formations to the center of the city. There was not a sound or a murmur. The Berliners looked on in amazement, as if they had just awakened from a nightmare. They saw a giant marching alone at the head of his troops in streets free of Communists. Realizing they had been liberated, they burst forth in cheers for their liberator.

There was one last Bolshevik stronghold: police headquarters. It was commanded by Eichhorn, Lenin's agent in Berlin. Noske waited for night to fall. Then he ordered a sudden and massive attack. The building walls were biased away. There followed two hours of ferocious hand-to-hand combat. Everywhere the Communists were tracked down. Few survived. Yesterday's Communist dictators of Berlin were in a panic. Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, who had subjected Berlin to a reign of terror, were now in hiding. They were found on January 15, 1919 and taken to the Berlin Guard's headquarters. After a brief interrogation they were executed on the spot. Thus the Bolshevik dictators of Germany were shot down like rabid dogs. For two months they had terrorized the country. They had had control over the masses, but their disorderly minds and verbiage cost them their lives. Lenin had planned every detail of his 1917 revolution, never wasting time on talk: he thought and acted ahead. The socialist leaders expressed no regret at the gruesome end of their coalition partners. Scheidemann, who, the following week, would become president of the Reich council, summed up what had happened: "The two victims (Liebknecht and Luxemburg) had every day called the people to take up arms to ovethrow the government. Now their own tactics have backfired against them."

The socialists had thought Noske's capture of Berlin meant the end of Bolshevism in Germany. They were mistaken. The Communists had regrouped. They seized Bremen, followed by the Ruhr and Saxony two months later. "People angered by misery and distress were led to destruction by conscienceless agents:' (Scheidemann, The Collapse, p. 264) The delegates at the Paris peace conference had shown indifference to the successive explosions of international Communism in Germany. Noske and Maercker had managed to stem the Red tide but few in Paris showed any concern that Europe might be engulfed in it. The Entente politicians' hatred of Germany took precedence over their own

security. They regarded the Eisners, Liebknechts and Luxemburgs as punishing angels who would keep Germany in turmoil. "The Entente," said Scheidemann, "was very happy to see the worst extremists in control of Germany. The Entente even wooed them with offers of aid and support, as in the case of the Bavarian extremists."

Noske's ruthless crushing of the Berlin Bolsheviks had given Germany breathing space. Elections were held; the results were surprising. Of 421 seats the Social Democrats won 163, the Center and the bourgeois national parties took 229, and the pro-Communist Independent Socialists and Communists, 22. The real winner was Noske, who declared to the new assembly: "It is now established that Germany fought only to save its life." Although he would be later denounced for his ruthlessness, in early 1919 he was acclaimed by all as the savior of Germany.

Noske persuaded the newly elected representatives that the congress should meet at Weimar rather than Berlin. Sporadic Communist violence could again flare up in Berlin, and most deputies did not relish the prospect of being made prisoners by crazed Sparticists a second time. On February 6, 1919, after an initial fracas with local Communists, the parliament of Germany opened at the city theater. Ebert read a lackluster speech in keeping with the general mediocrity of the assemblage. The deputies were petty-minded bourgeois, craven and servile. They hated the revolution-Ebert admitted it himself-and they felt embarrassed to have benefited from it to such an extent. Whether Social Democrats, Centrists, or democrats, they were all old political hacks from the Kaiser's Reichstag, interchangeable in their uninspiring drabness. Ebert was elected president and Scheidemann as speaker. They would be no match for the Communists, and at the first clash with them would fall to pieces.

No sooner had the new republic started its term of office than the Communists would provoke uprisings from Bavaria to Schleswig. For the next five months a handful of Reichswehr men would fight for Germany's survival. They would stand against Lenin's forces in Germany as well as against the avenging schemers of Versailles.

Chapter 49

First Weeks in Paris

While Germany was wracked by bloody insurrection, politicians and bureaucrats from all over the world were meeting in Paris. From January 18, 1919, to June 28, when the Versailles Treaty was finally signed, there were 1,500 sessions and 24 commissions. Despite the glittering social life the delegates still had time to indulge in schemes and intrigues. Lloyd George, flanked by Churchill and Balfour, busied himself by outwitting Clemenceau, who was busy clearing the deck of French politicians he thought useless or incompetent. Ambassador Cambon and President Poncaré were shunted aside, leaving Clemenceau on center stage. Immediately before the procedings opened, a Czech politician lobbying to become prime minister of a yet-to-be-created Czechoslovakia was nearly assassinated. Brazil obtained three seats on the supreme council without anybody knowing why, since the Brazilian army had hardly crossed swords with the Germans. The Slovakian delegate, Milan Stefanik, was shot down over Bratislava by Czech agents whose masters were determined to suppress Slovakian sovereignty. The famed Polish musician Paderewski, who had become president of Poland, was cutting a dashing figure at the Paris Opera. Colorful delegates from exotic parts of the world had joined the conference either to press their own demands or just to be part of the ongoing festivities. The German delegates were, on the other hand, ostracized. They were excluded from the conference deliberations: they were not to be heard or seen. Only during the very last days did they appear, to sign the treaty. On that occasion they were greeted with a hail of stones. One German delegate's secretary was hit in the face and lost her right eye.

Paris was the setting for five months of continuous parties and revelry. Thousands of more or less authentic victors were celebrating. Fashionable writers like Proust, Cocteau and Gide were much in demand in French salons. Revolutionaries were also highly prized. Madame de Jouvenel, a leading socialite, gave a magnificent reception in honor of the assassin of Russian Grand Duke Serge and the tsarist minister Plehve. Bedroom diplomacy was also elevated to new

heights with the influx of thousands of Czech, Romanian and Serbian high-class prostitutes brought in by the central European delegates. Their mission was to reinforce the claims and demands made at the conference table in the intimacy of the boudoir. Clemenceau commented: “These girls are destroying the conscience of the arbiters of peace.” The Slovak Stefanik was outraged but his colleague Benes felt the "ladies were playing an essential part" in convincing the delegates that it was wise and proper to place the Bohemians and Moravians as well as 6 million Germans, Poles, and Hungarians, under Czech control. Benes' star performer was called Doria. She spoke five languages and developed great influence among all the delegates staying at the Hotel Crillon. The British delegate Nicolson greatly admired another outstanding practitioner, Madame Alexander: "She knew everything, had access everywhere, obtained everything she asked. She was one figure who made history but was not known to the general public."

If some delegates lost their conscience others lost their health. The puritan Wilson was quick to take to the Paris nightlife. His detractors claimed he had contracted a venereal disease that drained his already precarious health, and his "predicament" became the talk of the conference. Clemenceau saw fit to exploit the situation by passing the word around. His right-hand man Tardieu told House: "I understand it is a very delicate matter but we fear the president is about to suffer a physical breakdown." Nicolson had remarked that all the delegates were stunned by "his psychophysiological collapse." All those opposed to his Fourteen Points were delighted with Wilson's predicament. They would even hold meetings at his bedside with apparent sympathy, while hardly able to hold their glee. Wilson was aware of his illness and was terrified its nature could be revealed to his puritanical electorate. At first he made an attempt to stand by his Fourteen Points but finally gave up. Within weeks there would be nothing left of them. Even had Wilson led a life of absolute virtue in Paris, his plan to reform the world was doomed from the start. The British Government was determined to grab oil-producing countries in the Middle East despite all the treaties and agreements they had signed to the contrary. French politicians were determined to occupy Saarland, the Rhineland and points east militarily. A greedy mafia of Serbian, Czech, Romanian and Polish politicians was equally determined to trample human rights and gobble up 20 million Germans, Slovaks, Hungarians, Croatians, and Austrians without the slightest consultation. The dismemberment of Turkey and the appropriation of German colonies by the British were also on the agenda. The indigenous peoples were parcelled off as in the days of slavery. Wilson had come to Paris with the highest political and moral authority. Without him the Allies would have lost the war in 1917. Even in June, 1918 Tardieu had declared he no longer believed in victory. The Germans had contacted him when they decided to surrender. Wilson had negotiated the armistice conditions himself and secured their acceptance by the Allies. Under normal circumstances he should have had his way at Versailles. As Bullitt wrote:

In the history of humanity the future has rarely depended on one man to such

an extent as during Wilson's first month in Paris. When he found himself facing Lloyd George and Clemenceau in House's office at the Hotel Crillon on March 14, 1919 the fate of the world depended on him alone. But not one Allied signatory of the armistice had accepted it with sincerity. Their war aims, the real ones, had been arranged among themselves with secret treaties during the course of the hostilities. They were diametrically opposed to Wilson's peace plans, including impartial justice and equal rights for all people. In the eyes of Clemenceau the Fourteen Points ... were the ramblings of a lunatic. (President Wilson, p. 360.)

Although Wilson realized the Allies were not cooperating, he could do little about it because he had absolutely no knowledge of European affairs. An observer said: "His ignorance of Europe bordered on the fantastic. It left people stunned with disbelief. He had no idea of the existence of 3 million Sudeten Germans, whom Czechoslovakia wanted to enslave." "Masaryk had never talked to me about them," Wilson said. Wilson was also convinced there were more than 100 million Jews in the world.

Teams of foreign affairs experts from Harvard, Yale and other Ivy League centers had been set up to inform the president, but Wilson did not seek their advice. Robert Lansing, his secretary of state, was knowledgeable about Europe, but Wilson did not let him put his ability to use. Even House was losing his influence, because Wilson's second wife did not like him and warned her husband almost everyday that he was a Judas. The British politicians had not waited to meet with Wilson before helping themselves to everything they wanted. Their war aims had been satisfied at the time of Germany's surrender, since they had already acquired German assets and colonies. Their aim at Versailles and Paris was to sabotage the French, whom they now regarded as their new rivals. They also regarded Wilson's peace plan as totally irrelevant. Wilson's geographical ignorance was matched by that of Clemenceau, who looked upon central Europe as a confused jungle. France was all he knew and all that interested him. Tardieu, however, had enlisted experts to prepare a lengthy list of claims and reparations. Bureaucrats of all countries were kept busy in 58 commissions. They made little impact and were only called on to produce demands to back up the various ministerial councils. The "Council of Ten," which was the Council of Five with the addition of the five major presidents, held 72 sessions; the "Council of Four," without the Japanese minister, held 145 sessions and even the "Council of Three" met when the Italian prime minister stormed out of the meeting, shouting, "down with Wilson." Harold Nicolson, the English delegate, took extensive notes of the proceedings and published them in a book called Peacemakers 1919. He recalled: "The work was discouraging. One felt so fallible in these matters! A map, a pencil, a transparent paper. My heart sank at the thought of the individuals our erratic lines would save or reject."

Nicolson described the proceedings during a meeting at the conference of Paris:

Afternoon, final revision of the Austrian borders. I walk to Rue Nitot after lunch to brief A.J. Balfour. Inside a room with heavy tapestry below the portrait of

a smiling Marie de Medicis the sound of a fountain could be heard coming from the garden. The fate of the Austro-Hungarian empire would be decided in this room. Hungary would be cut up by five distinguished gentlemen with indolence and irresponsibility. While the water sprinkles the lilac trees, while those with knowledge anxiously observe, while Balfour dozes off, while Lansing doodles, while Pichon lounges in his large arm-chair, winking like an owl, Transylvania is redrawn. After Tardieu and Lansing trade insults like tennis balls, Hungary is dismembered by noon. They go on to Czechoslovakia. For Yugoslavia the committee's report is adopted without modification. Then afternoon tea-and-macaroons is served.

On May 13, 1919 Nicolson and his colleagues were called to enlighten Lloyd George, Balfour and Wilson about Asia Minor. They spread a large map on the dining room table:

Everybody sits around the map. It is like a cake about to be cut and served. Lloyd George explains his proposal. The Italians demand Scala Nova. "No," says Lloyd George, "you can't have it, it's full of Greeks!" He continues to show them there are other Greeks in Makri and along the coastline. I whisper to him, "No, there are very few Greeks around there." He answers, "Yes there are; can't you see it's colored green." I understand then he was confusing my map with an ethnic map. He believes green means Greek and brown means Turkish, instead of valleys and mountains. Orlando and Sonnino chatter in Italian. They demand the coal mines of Eregli. Lloyd George says, "But it is bad coal and in any case there isn't much of it." Sonnino translates the remark to Orlando who answers, "I want them, it's good for my morale." Finally, they appear ready to accept a mandate on the Adalia region but we do not know very clearly if in exchange they will give up Fiume and Rhodes. We pull out the agreement of the League of Nations concerning the mandates. We notice it stipulates "with the consent and wish of the people concerned." They find this phrase very amusing and they all laugh. Orlando's white jowls wobble with mirth and his puffy eyes swell up with tears of joy. It is immoral and impractical but I obey my orders.

Professor Clive Day from Yale University confirmed Nicolson's observations:

> Each time a territorial question arose they pored over the maps with imperturbable gravity. However, no one knew whether the maps were upside down. It really did not matter anyway. (*What Happened in Paris*, 1918-1919, p. 30.)

As if this were not enough, many of these maps had been tampered with. Lloyd George himself became aware that the maps and accompanying data had been falsified and gave vent to his outrage publicly at Queen's Hall: "All the documentation provided by some of our allies during the negotiations was false and cooked up. We have made our decisions on the basis of a fraud." It is in such ignorance, irresponsibility and dishonesty that the Versailles treaty, the most important treaty in the history of the world, was organized. Field Marshall

Smuts, prime minister of South Africa, then a British dominion, admitted later: "Everything we have done here is far worse than the Congress of Vienna. The statesmen of 1815 at least knew what was going on. Our statesmen have no idea.

To the political imcompetence of the day one must add the general venality of the press. Not unlike today, it had the power to make or break all incumbent or prospective politicians. Anybody could be a hero one day and a pariah the next. The press decided what was news and what was not. The press lords had become fabulously wealthy before the war. Millions of dollars poured in from Russia, Serbia and Romania to the proprietors of newspapers, who in turn dictated to the politicians to lend vast sums to these countries. Corporations also sought the favors of the press by plying them with cash, stocks and even a generous share of their profits. French politicians knew who was boss and lived in fear of running afoul of the press. They yielded to the press barons' orders every time. The Russian and Serbian millions were well invested. The press blackmailed the French government to lend billions of gold francs to Russia and Serbia. The press lords, of course, were getting commissions on these loans. The billions naturally came from the pockets of the hard-pressed French taxpayers. It would have been political suicide for any politician to voice opposition to such loans. Even during the war Russian money kept coming: one million gold francs went to *Le Figaro*. This was at a time when a soldier risking his life in the trenches was paid five cents a day. The making of the Versailles Treaty considerably raised the stakes for the power-and-money-hungry press. It was no longer a matter of getting fat commissions on extorted loans but of a share in cutting up the world. All the Versailles "victors" were there to acquire territory. The Czechs wanted a corridor slicing through Hungary so they could unite with Serbia. The Serbians wanted to gobble up Albania. The Greeks wanted Smyrna. The Italians wanted all the land between Fiume and Adalia, well inside Turkey. Rich with French loans, all these voracious claimants plied the press with a continuing flow of money. The press conducted an ongoing auction: whoever paid the most could be reasonably assured of a favorable treatment for even the most absurd claim. French academician André Maurois noted: "The agitation of the masses was not only unfortunate but it was the work of a press interwoven with governments." *Le Temps* had the highest rates: from 100,000 gold francs to 200,000 per "documented" article. *Figaro* and *Le Matin* fetched 50,000, the *Journal des Débats*, 25,000 francs.

* * *

The favorseekers continued to outbid each other, often with dire results. *Le Temps* dropped Serbia after receiving 3 million gold francs when it was paid 5 million to say the opposite. Serbian politicians, well versed in corruption for many years, declared themselves to be outraged! Dragomir Stefanovich, son-in-law and spokesman for Serbian political boss Pashich, declared: "We are very dispelased in Belgrade at *Le Temps*'s attitude. It is useless to spend more

money to buy its good will." There was also a heavy traffic in business deals and contracts. Le Temps's owners had been granted a construction contract in Russia as well as exploitation rights in Serbia's richest copper mines at Bor and in the Slovakian forests in the summer of 1914. Fortunes were made almost overnight. By February, 1919 the Romanians admitted having spent "more than 10 million gold francs, without counting petty bribes." Added the chief delegate of Bucharest: "But at that price Transylvania and Bukovina will really cost us nothing." Indeed, at that price it would cost Romania an average of three francs per Hungarian in the denationalization and annexation of the Hungarian population and territory. The greed of these people at the trough of victory even shocked Clemenceau, who called them "jackals." The American secretary of state, Lansing, was appalled and made public his fears of the consequences of such practices. In ignorance and corruption the fate of the world would be played out. The League of Nations would be created, the maps of nations would be redrawn, populations would be annexed or exchanged, huge reparations schedules would be set. There was never any question of rebuilding peace with Germany. The Germans were meant to be reduced to total impotence forever. To ignorance and corruption could be added blind hatred. Germany was to be destroyed by any means. Allied politicians saw in Bolshevism a wonderful adjunct of vengeance. Germany was to be hammered into oblivion between Allied vengeance and Communist terror. The Paris atmosphere was so thick with hatred that all those who did not display genocidal tendencies toward the Germans were immediately branded enemy lackeys. The American delegate Bowman complained: "At all times one had to give tangible proof of hatred against the enemy lest one be accused of being Germanophile." Churchill however did not object, showing himself a consummate demagogue: "One must satisfy an excited crowd." Clemenceau was blunt: "The peace conference is a continuation of war."

Chapter 50

A Comedy

The Germans dutifully implemented the draconian conditions of the November armistice. The 4 million soldiers of the German army had gone home and, aside from the few thousand volunteers who defended Berlin against the Bolsheviks, Germany was in fact disarmed and defenseless. Even the most ardent anti-German politician of them all, Tardieu, conceded: "As of January 15, 1919 all the materiel which the November 11 armistice had ordered Germany to deliver was in the hands of the victors." (*Peace*, p. 141.) Marshal Foch, who had moved his headquarters to the German town of Trier, renewed the armistice for another two months but this time under even worse conditions. Peace had become an extension of the war: Germany had disarmed but was still the object of war.

The victors lacked the statemanship to conclude a peace for the benefit of Europe and the world. They lived in the past, where the sole objective of war was to acquire real estate from neighboring countries. Lenin had changed all that. Communism fought for mastery of the whole world. The conquest of Germany had started in November, 1918 as a steppingstone to conquer Europe. The enemy was no longer the fugitive Kaiser. Prostrate Germany had become the bulwark protecting Europe from the Communist onslaught. As much as the Allies hated Germany, their own survival demanded they did not destroy this bulwark. Lloyd George, who had promised his electorate that he would pulverize Germany, showed some belated concern when he asked: "Is it our interest to throw Germany into the arms of Bolshevism?"

However, the Allies were caught in a web of secret treaties which left them little room to meet new situations. They had agreed to Wilson's Fourteen Points so long as it ensured American's participation in the war, but with victory they had reasserted their original war aims. Tardieu explained why his government, until the armistice, had made no mention of its policy of "breaking down German unity": "victory came late for the Allies. In 1918 it was the defeat of the British army under General Gough, in May it was the 'Chemin des Dames' and the bombing of Paris. To announce at this time or before what we called

the 'vivisection of Germany' would have been singularly incautious." (Peace, p. 409.) Clemenceau also looked on Germany's 60 million population, 20 million more than France, as the height of effrontery. He declared: "In the old days I know what would have been done with them." Short of killing them all at the revolutionary guillotine Clemenceau was determined to distribute a large part of the German population among all of Germany's neighbors. The French, the Czechs, and Poles, the Italians, the Serbs, the Belgians, the Danes were all meant to absorb millions of Germans. Wilson did not fathom the greed of his allies until after six months of intrigue and doubletalk. He then returned to Washington, a bitter, disillusioned man who realized he had been fooled.

Wilson's first capitulation dealt with the establishment of the League of Nations. It was one of the Fourteen Points that it would be the forum for implementing peace and the cornerstone of the armistice. It was the solemn engagement of all belligerents, winners and losers alike, to proceed in creating the league once the armistice had been signed. David Hunter Miller, Wilson's legal counsel declared: In truth the declaration of the Fourteen Points relative to the establishment of a League of Nations had formally become, as our government note of November 5, 1918 proves, one of the basic conditions of peace with Germany. It was the right of Germany to insist for its own protection that the League of Nations be established. (What Happened in Paris in 1918-1919, p. 311.) This right of Germany had been the very basis of its acceptance of the armistice. "Germany," said Miller, "had always vigorously maintained that it interpreted President Wilson's words, 'a general association of nations,' not only as an association of nations making the treaty, but as an association of which Germany would immediately become a member." This would not happen. Decisive years would pass without any German participation in the League of Nations. Clemenceau had set the tone for dispensing with a German voice: "One must never negotiate with a German or make a deal; one must impose a solution on him." The most far-flung British dominions were made members but for some years Germany was excluded. Thus the armistice conditions were violated before the peace conference even began. Professor Pierre Rain, a French observer, stated: "The integrity of the doctrine was compromised: the worm was already in the fruit." (Versailles' Europe, p. 49.) The British delegate John Maynard Keynes said: "It would be stupid to believe that there should be in the world much room for tales like the League of Nations or the principle of self-determination. These are only ingenious formulas, used to tip the balance of power in one's own favor." (The Economic Consequences of the Peace, p. 37-38.) Rain also noted: "There was no real acceptance of Wilson's Fourteen Points."

On January 8, 1918 Wilson had already made it known that the "interests of the colonial subjects must weigh equally with those of other territories." The basis of his Fourteen Points was the self-determination of all peoples. The British Empire, on which the sun never set, had no intention of entertaining such a policy. India, with a population of 320 million at the time, was restive under British colonial rule. Mass demonstrations were held in favor of independence and liberation from colonialism while the Treaty of Versailles was being nego-

tiated. On April 19, 1919 British troops did not hesitate for a moment to fire on the unarmed demonstrators in the city of Amritsar. 379 were killed and countless wounded. In Egypt crowds demanding independence "in the name of Wilsonian principles" were also brutally put down, as were protesters in Palestine. In accordance with the legendary British policy of "divide and rule" the British used Australians to massacre the Indians as they had done a few years before when Australians were brought into South Africa to make war on the Boers. Indian mercenaries were used to repress the Egyptians; Egyptians were used to quell the Palestinians. As recently as 1982, Nepalese Gurkhas were used in the war against Argentina.

The British empire had been put together by years of piratical operations and political double-crosses. "The City," as the British financial establishment is known, presided over the exploitation of its colonies and dominions with force and ruthlessness. The moralism pervading Wilson's Fourteen Points was anathema to the City, even as a public relations facade. During the first week of the conference British delegate Crowe reprimanded his colleague Nicolson, an honest Englishman, because he had detected some scruples in him. Nicolson somehow felt obligated to honor the commitment his government had given Wilson during the November armistice agreements. Said Crowe: This would be an absurdity, my dear Nicolson; your mind is not clear. You think you are logical and sincere but you are not. Would you apply the right of self-determination to Egypt, India, Malta, Gibraltar? If you are not ready to go as far as that, don't pretend you are logical. And if you want to go that far you would be well advised to go back to London immediately. The liberty of people would remain the liberty of dominating people. Within the French colonial empire, the Destour party in Tunisia had asked for some measure of freedom immediately after the armistice. The tribal chiefs of Italian-controlled Libya were pressing for an independent "Republic of Tripolitania." In Spanish Morocco the Moslem leader Abd el- Krim had organized a rebellion for independence. In the Dutch East Indies the independence movement Sarekat Islam, with 2'/z million members, was agitating for the rights President Wilson had promised them.

Not a single country among the Allies would grant the slightest independence to any of the countries it dominated. The inhabitants of the former German colonial empire had simply passed under British rule; a few had passed under French, Belgian or even Japanese rule. The British Establishment hypocritically called its new colonies "mandates." Wilson had proclaimed that the "mandates" should be administered by "the states best suited to perform the task." The British had grabbed the German colonies at gunpoint and somehow felt ordained to run them. "It was then," noticed Nicolson, not without indignation, "that a fabric of sophisms and jesuitical argument would pervert with lies the text and the substance of the whole treaty." The "sacred mission" assigned to the future League of Nations had been scuttled in a matter of days. The powerful would remain powerful and the weak (even if they numbered hundreds of millions) would see their freedom disappear like a magician's rabbit.

Because the Allies still needed American financial aid they paid lip service to

Wilson's project, the League of Nations. But within two weeks the substance of the League had been sucked out of it. Even the clause on religious equality would not survive, although Wilson had emphatically demanded it. The British Establishment torpedoed this particular clause because it did not want to change the practice of excluding Catholics from acceding to the British throne.

Wilson let go of his principles, one after the other. In November, 1918 he dropped the freedom of the seas; in January, 1919 he dropped the right of self-determination for colonial peoples, and now he was abandoning religious equality. Ironically, Wilson would finish off the League of Nations with his own nationalist demands. Wilson's "right of self-determination" was in total conflict with the Monroe Doctrine, by which the United States claimed the right to intervene in the affairs of all the countries of the Americas to the total exclusion of any other country in the world. American public opinion was not about to renounce this monopoly, and Congress put Wilson on notice not to tamper with the doctrine. This time Wilson's principles were subordinated to electoral considerations. With the forked tongue of diplomatic gobbledygook, Wilson transformed the principle of self-determination into a truly Orwellian statement, embodied in the League's Article XV: "Regional ententes like the Monroe Doctrine are in no way contradictory to the principle of self- determination; on the contrary they are perfectly compatible with it." With a hypocrisy that would have made the British proud, Wilson was just playing on words. The fact remained that only the United States had the right of intervention in some 20 American countries, without any reciprocity on their part. Deprived of any relevance, the League of Nations would open its doors in Geneva as a monument to futility. For 20 long years, billions of dollars would be lavished on partying bureaucrats and diplomats from all over the world. Summer was especially favored as the social season to see and to be seen. Briand, the French minister, was once heard quipping to his aides: "Now look, don't you know that truth must never be spoken? Remember that in the future!" Every delegate was living a lie and everyone knew it. The League's statutes had been drafted in less than three weeks, strictly for appearance's sake. "Self-determination and human rights are a joke," said Tardieu. Wilson realized this more than anyone. The League was as hollow as a drum. Wilson thought he could substitute form for substance. During the reading of the statutes, his aides brought him a Bible, which "he clutched with a trembling hand" throughout the ceremony as if he were about to utter the oath to uphold the Constitution. Producing the Bible at the ratification of inequity only compounded its hypocrisy. The emasculation of the League would mark Wilson's first defeat. The failure of disarmament would mark the second.

Chapter 51

The Sabotage of Disarmament

Along with the Fourteen Points Wilson had proclaimed the necessity of establishing world disarmament. Once more the president of the Untied States was theoretically right. It was a noble dream of great importance for the peace of the world. Its success depended, of course, on the willingness of his European allies to share it. The armistice had been concluded on the basis that Germany would immediately disarm and the other countries would follow suit. André François-Poncet, France's most senior ambassador, recognized that the Versailles diplomats had decided not only upon the disarmament of Germany but of all other countries as well. "The treaty expressly stated, and Clemenceau had confirmed it in a letter to the German delegation, that the disarmament of Germany would only be a prelude to general disarmament." (François-Poncet, From Versailles to Potsdam, p. 75). The Paris Conference had already dealt with Germany's disarmament. Germany was militarily reduced to nil. In the course of the debate its forces had been reduced to 96,000 men and 4,000 officers. This left Germany defenseless in the face of Communist aggression. (In 1932 Germany would count six million votes for the Communist Party.) Numerous clauses ensured that this meager contingent could never be expanded:

Art. 176: Suppression of all military academies. Art. 180: Disarmament of all fortifications in the demilitarized zone. Art. 198: Demobilization of all air force personnel. Art. 202: Delivery to the Allies of all air force materiel. Arts. 42/43: Complete demilitarization of the Rhineland. Art. 166: Limitation on munition depots. Art. 170 Prohibition on importing or exporting military equipment. Art. 171: Prohibition on manufacturing tanks and toxic gas. Art. 188: Prohibition on manufacturing arms, munitions or military materiel in any other plants but those controlled by the Allies. Suppression of all arsenals. Art. 172: Delivery to the Allies of manufacturing secrets and patents. Art. 173: Abolition of [compulsory-ed.] military service. Art. 177: Schools and sports clubs prohibited from involvement in military teaching or having any contact with the defense ministry. Art. 213: The right of the League of Nations to

control Germany. Clemenceau relied on Article 213 to keep Germany down forever.

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It was not enough that both sides of the Rhine River be out of bounds to German soldiers. Germany was prohibited from sending troops to within 35 miles of the Rhine on the German side, even to defend the country against Communist revolution. This prohibition gave the green light to the Communists to rush to the Rhineland, to be ready to take over. Within two months of the edict, in March, 1919 Communist shock troops were invading the Rhineland. A small unit of German soldiers was dispatched to contain them and restore order. Clemenceau seized the opportunity provided by this infraction of the edict to occupy two major German cities beyond the armistice line. Germany was caught between the implacable enforcement of the Versailles Treaty and a wave of Bolshevik insurrection. Tardieu proudly announced each step of Germany's military downfall: Completed reduction: Soldiers, 98%, infantry division, 96.7%, army high command, 100%, chief of staff commands, 97%, heavy artillery, 100%, light artillery, 96.6%. Our delegation is responsible for the work of breaking down the power of the most military nation on earth . . . We struck at the head when we eliminated the High Command, the military academies and the mobilization apparatus. We delivered a body blow when we eliminated conscription, when we fixed to 12 years the term of service for the 100,000 men allowed in uniform. We have eliminated their entire heavy artillery, their tanks, their air force. We have prohibited the right to manufacture them and their right to keep them. (Tardieu, *Peace*). During that same year Trotsky would raise with unparalleled brutality an army of 5 million men. Tardieu had little concern for this type of "disarmament." Bolshevik mobilization, however, did start to concern some of the other Allies. On May 23, 1919 Lloyd George admitted: "Although I went along with limiting the German army to 100,000 men, I recognize today that it is very small. It may be advisable to reassess this whole problem." On June 8, 1919 the Allied Committee comprising Field Marshal Henry Wilson and Generals Bliss, Destiker, Cavallero and Nara proposed that Germany should be allowed to have armed forces of a minimum of 300,000 men. The move was blocked by the French politicians. (Tardieu, Peace, P. 159)

The obligations imposed on Germany were accompanied by a dizzying array of controls. Allied missions in uniform would for years crisscross Germany to check barracks and factories for the slightest infraction. Clemenceau shouted in Parliament: "If you go into this treaty with as much joy as our men went into the war, you will bring it alive ... When you are done with this magnificent task you will be entitled to congratulate yourselves." Tardieu added: "A modern mobilization takes years of preparation and it must be done openly. These conditions are no longer in the hands of the Germans." The Allies, who had pledged that they would disarm after Germany had done so, were now welching on their armistice obligations. Even the establishment historian Renouvin

recognized that Germany's disarmament could only be enforced as a prelude to general disarmament, as agreed by the Armistice signatories: There would be no question that Churchill would demand that the [Armistice] commitment would be renewed in the Treaty. But it was then suggested, that a codicil be inserted linking this disarmament to the "general perspectives of universal disarmament" before the chapters dealing with Germany's disarmament. President Wilson agreed to this renewal of the Armistice agreement. The Germans had never given grounds for Allied suspicion. Marshal Foch himself would state in writing in 1927: "German disarmament has been totally completed." For the previous eight years the Allied Commission on disarmament had operated at full capacity and concluded officially that Germany had been fully disarmed. During these eight years the Allies failed to comply with their signed agreement in the Armistice and Versailles Treaty. They did not make the slightest attempt to live up to the Treaty despite Germany's total compliance. The German governments from 1919 to 1927 were almost totally subservient to the Allies and never represented the slightest threat. There was no reason for the Allies to refuse to abide by the treaty they had signed. After fifteen years of consistent welching it was to be expected that the Germans would question the validity of complying with a one-sided agreement. Not only did the Allies not disarm as they had agreed, but they never stopped re-arming.

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Clemenceau's war-through-peace policy would, of course, guarantee outright war sooner or later. The Allies would justify their non-compliance with the diplomatic doubletalk at the League of Nations. If a resolution came up to implement the treaty, Clemenceau and the British could always be counted on to exercise their veto power. Up until the beginning of World War II the veto would be used and abused by the Allies for the purpose of side-stepping their treaty obligations. While the Allies kept Germany in a total state of disarmament, a handful of volunteers decided to face the Communist legions Lenin was hurling against Germany.

CHAPTER LII

Chapter 52

Soviet Republics in Germany

The Spartacists' electoral failure in January, 1919 followed by Noske's military victory over them, was fairly general. The extreme left had managed to win some 20 seats in the Weimar Assembly, a dozen or so in Saxony, four in Wurttemberg and one in Hesse. "They were looking east, waiting for the Soviet army to put them into power," wrote Benoit-Méchin. Although they lacked the leadership of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, they had grown in strength. Germany suffered a famine of terrible proportions. Pregnant mothers were losing their babies through sheer lack of food. The allies had confiscated 5,000 locomotives and 150,000 railway cars with the result that factories could no longer be supplied with coal and raw material. Millions of returned servicemen were out of work; wounded veterans were left to fend for themselves. In Berlin there were 180,000 men out of work in January, 1919; in February there were 240,000; in March 560,000 and in April more than one million. It was inevitable that such misery and famine would throw the masses into the hands of the agitators. The Allied politicians were too consumed with hatred to see the Soviet menace. Allied generals stationed in the occupied Rhineland were, however, sufficiently alarmed to send graphic reports. General Plumer, commander of the British occupation forces in Germany, wired this report to England on March 8, 1919: "Our troops cannot stand the sight of children dying from hunger; I beseech you to send food to Germany." Appalling figures were reaching London: "At least 200I0 of all German babies are stillborn and 40% who are born die within a month." Nicolson's notes reflected his anguish:

I am very tired; I feel bad and my morale is low. What are we doing about peace? What type of peace are we after? There is a very somber telegram from Plumer. He begs us to send food to Germany. He says our troops cannot stand to see children dying of starvation any more. The observer from the Peace Conference reports that people's complexion is yellow through malnutrition and starvation. Even Churchill recognized the German plight:

This is a very sad story. The armistice conditions prescribed that the blockade

of Germany would continue. However, at the Germans' request a clause was added that stipulated, "The Allies and the United States" would "consider sending food to Germany if it was necessary." This clause was not implemented until January 16, 1919. On the contrary, Germany's blockade was extended to the Baltic ports, thus causing the famine to increase in Germany. I hear some painful stories about the suffering of mothers and children.

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The "painful stories," that is, the death of 4007o of Germany's babies, did not impress the Allies, however. The British blockade remained as tight as ever. During the first post-war winter more than one million German children perished. The Allies were concerned only with forcing Germany to sign the Versailles Treaty. With appalling inhumanity the Allies calculated that the tightened blockade would bring Germany to its knees at the conference table. The crowds in Berlin, Saxony and the streets of every city in Germany did not understand this barbaric blackmail. People were dying of starvation; there was no work and inflation was melting the German mark. The Sparticists had been trained in Moscow to exploit this national disaster. The Eberts and the Scheidemanns, playing the liberal bourgeois, were impotent to change anything. They offered no hope, no plan except liberal verbiage. When people protested they ordered the police to shoot at them. People were ready to hear another voice. Clemenceau and Tardieu were blinded to the situation by hatred while Lloyd George and Churchill were bound by the strictures of British politics. Meanwhile, Lenin's ambassador in Berlin had been caught redhanded distributing funds to the insurrectionists: "Joffe was distributing money through Haase (a German Communist deputy) in order to provoke the revolution." (Scheidemann, The Collapse, p. 247).

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Lenin's agent had been expelled from Germany but continued to organize subversion through radio messages. Communist insurrectionists were on the offensive throughout Germany. Communist communes and local dictatorships were springing up everywhere: "Every town and village was declared an autonomous republic with responsibility for supplying food and even conducting foreign affairs," wrote Scheidemann. Immediately an establishment of Red commissars and petty bureaucrats put themselves on the payroll of the taxpayers. "They had," said Socialist minister Barth, "perverted the revolution to a question of salary." They had become greedy stockholders of the revolution.

"People appeared from everywhere," added Scheidemann, "to claim their share of the revolutionary pie and jockey for position." The German Communists had in fact invented the system of Nomenklatura whereby a chosen few sponged on the majority of the people. The system has been in force in the Soviet Union ever since: 750,000 Nomenklatura members live in luxury off 250 million people.

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The Leninist insurrectionists would, after establishing their soviet republics, proceed to commit horrible massacres in order to purge "undesirable" elements. The anti-Communist volunteers had the choice of fighting back or being slaughtered. The Leninists had released violent criminals from jail and had enlisted them to perform the more grisly atrocities. Germany had become a Communist jungle. For three months unrelenting violence gripped the nation with fear. The people were now at the mercy of Communist killers. German patriots who could still think for themselves knew they had to roll back the Bolsheviks before the final meeting at Versailles. They had six months to reverse the tide. The regional soviets would soon find their massacres counterproductive.

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No sooner had the Berlin Communists been crushed than Bremen was put to the sword. The Communists took control of the port in order to intercept any vessel that might contain food. These vessels were mostly sent by a charitable institution called the Hoover Commission. The delivery of food meant the difference between life and death for countless starving children. Yet it was official Communist policy to exploit and compound starvation in order to start the class war. Benoit-Méchin wrote: Since January 10, 1919, a hardly disguised dictatorship was established (in Bremen). The Socialist treasury, as well as the Socialist newspaper, was seized by the Communists. The banks were held up and emptied of their contents. Returning veterans were greeted with a hail of machine-gun fire. The survivors were taken prisoner. Shipyards and docks were sealed off with barbed wire. Squads of Red militia were ordered to shoot anyone attempting to resume work. While the country was dying of starvation the Hoover Commission ships, loaded with food, were in the hands of the Communists. (L'Armée allemande, pp. 185/186). The ports of Hamburg and Cuxhaven were similarly taken over by the Communists. Seventy thousand workers were kept from work by the Red terror. Noske was overwhelmed by numbers. His naval "Iron Brigade" numbered 1,600 men, his "Gerstenberg Division" numbered 1,900. He faced more than 100,000 Communist troops with his 3,500 men. Worse news was brought to Noske: Communist agitators had taken over the huge Ruhr coalfields and were "solidarizing" with Bremen and Hamburg. They would cut off Germany's coal supplies. Noske advised the frightened Socialist government: "If order is not immediately restored in Bremem the government can consider itself lost. It will have forfeited all respect. It is better to risk anything than accept this outrage." (Noske, Memoirs, p. 42). Against all odds Noske led his "Gerstenberg Division" of 1,900 men to Bremen on February 3, 1919. After three days of ferocious fighting Noske managed to recapture Bremen and the Communist agitators were put to death. The soviets of Hamburg and Bremerhaven rushed reinforcements but were mowed down by Noske's soldiers. Noske kept the initiative and after a lightning attack forced Red Hamburg to capitulate. The port was reopened and food finally got through. Three thousand five hundred patriots had routed 100,000 Moscow-backed Communists. Noske had courage and leadership qualities, which the Marxists lacked. The workers were amazed to see their Red leaders run away

at the first shot, leaving them as cannon fodder.

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While the fire was being extinguished in the North Sea ports, the Ruhr and Westphalia were exploding in violence. The Communists made the tactical error of chosing regional revolutions instead of aiming at a national insurrection. This gave Noske the chance to put down the insurrections one by one with his outnumbered forces. The Communist-controlled union of the Ruhr demanded the nationalization of the coal mines. The Weimar politicians had, with characteristic cowardice, given in and made concessions just short of communization. The Marxist agitators were still not satisfied and organized strike after strike: the miners were only allowed to work 17 days out of 90. By February 6, 1919 the Communists were enforcing a general strike for the whole region. Three days later they declared the Ruhr "the independent North-West Republic." All coal shipments to the rest of Germany, which was enduring one of the most severe winters on record, were stopped. Once again Noske was called to liberate German soil from the alien grip of Communism. His little contingent of 2,750 volunteers faced 150,000 Red militiamen armed to the teeth. At the Hervest-Dorte town hall his men outflanked the Red cannons and were poised for attack. The Reds announced they would flood the coal mines if Noske attacked them. This would mean the mines would be out of commission for years. Noske kept his head and ceased all hostilities. He calculated that time was working to his advantage. Since the Communists had cut off real communications, the Ruhr population could not be supplied with food. The general strike had cost the workers more than 100 million marks. In a few weeks they had lost the capacity to buy food even at black market rates. Noske's right-hand man, General von Watter, felt the wives and children of the miners would help bring sanity back. He negotiated directly with the men: they would work the mines and resume coal shipments in exchange for food. Noske avoided a bloodbath by using psychology.

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No sooner had the Ruhr crisis been averted than Westphalia fell into the hands of Killian, the Jewish Bolshevik dictator. Operating from the city of Halle, Killian seized 50,000 rifles, a million rounds of ammunition and a number of machine guns from the old army depot. His "Revolutionary Council" enforced a general strike and jailed all railway workers. The schools, the newspapers, the utilities and medical services were shut down. Even the sanitation workers were ordered not to work, which left the town in a state of filth and squalor. Noske asked General Maercker to beat back this new insurrection with 3,500 volunteers.

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Maercker approached the town of Gotha, which had just seceded from Germany, on March 1, 1919. The Communists derailed one of his trains and savagely massacred the wounded. The officers were mutilated beyond recognition, dragged

through the streets and publicly thrown in the River Saale, where they drowned. Maercker just escaped with his life. The Communists had converted the town's theater into an impregnable fortress. Maercker was trying to avoid further bloodshed and sent a truce emissary, Colonel von Kluwer, to negotiate with the "Revolutionary Council." Before he could talk the Communists seized him, broke his jaw and most of his ribs. A screaming Communist mob dragged him through the same streets his fellow officers had been dragged the day before. With blood gushing from his multiple wounds, he was thrown into the Saale River. Still alive, he desperately attempted to swim ashore. Each time the Communists kicked him back into the water. Finally they finished him off with bullets. The outrage perpetrated on Colonel von Kluwer convinced Maercker that negotiations were now out of the question. He sent his best soldiers to clear the streets. One hundred twenty-three Communists were killed; Maercker lost seven men. The Communists panicked and went on a looting rampage. Maercker took 500 of them prisoners. Within 72 hours the Red militias were routed and made illegal. Maercker restored order by March 7.

Bremen, Westphalia and Halle had been retaken. The Soviet agents in Berlin were seething over this triple blow. They decided to launch another insurrection in Berlin itself. The professional agitators spread the word: "Workers! Proletarians! These are our orders: absolute discipline! Cold- blooded calm! Iron will! Everybody prepare to fight!" The Communists declared a general strike through a new front, the "workers' councils." This would be the fourth revolution in four months. Now Noske was on his own ground and he would handle the Communists himself. He asked for and received full power to quell the insurrection. On the first night the communists seized the police stations and looted the stores. On March 4, 1919 Noske stormed the Red stronghold in Spandau. For 20 hours the fighting raged in the streets of the Spandau district. Noske won the battle there but still had to face navy mutineers from Bremen and Hamburg, who had been in Berlin since the middle of November, 1918. They had ample ammunition and were operating from the exits of Berlin's subway. Dislodged from their guns and grenades, they retreated to the Red stronghold of Marstall, which became the target of intensive fire. A few hours later, they raised the white flag. The second and more formidable stronghold was the "Volksmarinehaus." Maercker gathered a small air squadron to drop naval tropedoes on the fortress. The wall were breached and Noske sent in his men. Inside they found 126 machine guns, 5,000 additional guns and rifles and two heavy artillery pieces. For another 50 hours ferocious fighting would take place in practically every street of Berlin. Gradually Noske was closing in on the last and main bastion of Communism in Berlin: Lichtenberg.

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The Communists had terrorized the working-class district of Lichtenberg after seizing the police building and other public offices along with 80 policemen and government soldiers. The local newspapers were also seized, which seems to have infuriated the other Berlin newspapers. There were headlines announcing

that all 80 policemen and soldiers had been massacred, which was officially confirmed by the interior minister. The news sent a shock wave through an already shock-proof Berlin. Noske declared by means of posters that anyone caught with weapons would be shot immediately. The Government Guard went further: "Any individual caught with arms in his house will be shot on the spot." The news of the massacre was in that case inaccurate: there had only five policemen assassinated. So many massacres had taken place in the previous weeks that the press headlines had been accepted at face value. Within hours hundreds of Communists would be killed. There would also be heavy government casualties. By March 11, 1919 the Communist force of 10,000 men had dwindled to 4,000. At last the Communist high command in the Lichtenberg town hall fell; the last insurrectionists were mowed down by machine gun. The Red commissar Dorrenbach managed to escape, but was killed a month later. The fourth Bolshevik uprising had been the most murderous: 10,400 civilians were killed and wounded. It was 10,400 too many but it would have been 100,000 if the Bolsheviks had conquered Berlin as they did Moscow. The following day Noske addressed the Reichstag in Weimar: "For one week the battle raged in all its horror. I can tell you that the insurrection has been crushed!" If the Communists had failed it was not because they lacked fighters. They were never short of men. Some of the people they enlisted fought with courage. They were torn by hunger and poverty, convinced they were fighting the right war. The dangers for Germany and Europe were immense. The crowds, thirsting for justice, were badly let down by their Marxist leaders. From Liebknecht to Thalmann in 1933 the failure of Red leadership in Germamy was constant. Had there been a German Lenin or even a German Trotsky, Clemenceau would have ended his career in Siberia.

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The insurrection may have been crushed in Berlin but Communist uprisings continued in other parts of Germanmy. Three weeks after Berlin, Magdeburg and Braunschweig were in the throes of insurrection. On April 2, 1919 a Communist force of 2,000 men took over Magdeburg and declared themselves and the city a Soviet republic. They broke all relations with the German government and announced their alliance with Moscow. The Socialists, formerly so friendly with the Communists, found themselves being beaten up and thrown out of windows. Once more they bleated for Noske to come and save them. Socialist politicians and bureaucrats were imprisoned, while convicted criminals were set free. Once again food stores were looted and factories closed, including those of the giant industrial cartel Krupp. The Reds took a federal minister, a general and a number of officers as hostages, liable to be shot at any time. Noske, exasperated, roared that he would "never tolerate such practices or the dismemberment of Germany." On April 12 he delivered an ultimatum to the Soviet Republic of Magdeburg to surrender.

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Noske entrusted Maercker to implement the ultimatum. Far from surrendering

the insurrectionists waged a furious battle against the government forces, killing 37 men. Maercker counterattacked with great speed and managed to free the hostages. Another Leninist regime was put down and a patriotic government was put in place. General von Kleist, the freed hostage, reviewed the troops in Magdeburg the next day. Maercker had organized the parade but had to leave in a hurry for the Braunschweig region, where a Jewish tailor called Merges had overthrown the government and had become the Bolshevik dictator of Braunschweig. He had enlisted the Kiel mutineers, who were living in the ducal palace, as his bodyguards. Merges had armed the Communists troops with large quantities of weapons seized in government arsenals and claimed he was forming "the embryo of a powerful Red army." He had broken with the central government, closed down the railways, stopped food supplies and had just declared that Braunschweig was now part of the Communist Third International, run by Moscow. Maercker probed the surroundings with minor skirmishing ensuing. Some 30 Communists were killed and 70 taken prisoner. Maercker encircled the city. His troops were ordered to give no quarter to all who resisted. Suddenly, Maercker was confronted by an extraordinary spectacle: a huge crowd was running in his direction, with cries of joy and thanks addressed to their liberators. The people of Braunschweig had overun the Red militias and had come to greet Maercker and his men to the hymn of Deutschland über Alles. It was Easter Day. The day of resurrection was symbolic for Braunschweig. Maercker recalled: "The crowd was so thick that I could hardly proceed; my horse was sinking in an avalanche of flowers." Maercker entered Braunschweig with the band leading the way.

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There was the proof. In Germany, as in Russia, the revolution was run by Jewish agitators determined to impose Communism by force on the unwilling majority. Violence, terror and Dark Age barbarism were their modus operandi, but at the first opportunity people would throw off the Marxist yoke. Braunschweig's Red commissars fled the popular wrath while the rank and file chose surrender. Maercker wisely decided on a show of leniency: "I judge it opportune to make their detention as light as possible." He was now free to look to Bavaria, which had become a soviet republic under the dictatorship of three Jews: Leviné, Levien, and Axelrod, sent by Lenin from Moscow. There was also the matter of a new soviet republic that had just sprung up in Hungary.

Chapter 53

The Communists in Budapest

On March 12, 1919 power in Hungary fell into the hands of another Soviet agent, Bela Kun, likewise a Communist Jew. Lenin had earmarked Hungary as the east central European springboard for Bolshevism. This time the Allies took notice. It mattered little to them when the Communists massacred Germans but it did matter when east central Europe was being interfered with. The Allies regarded it as their preserve and that of their local allies the Czechs, the Romanians, and the Serbians. Clemenceau, however, saw the opportunity to negotiate with the new Marxist potentate from the Danube and his ambassador in Vienna to invite him to Paris. Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau decided to send a special delegation to Budapest to deliver the invitation officially. The mission was to be headed by South African Prime Minister Smuts who traveled by private train to Budapest. Thus a luxury train would be crossing a devasted Europe of 200 million starving people to pay homage to the sallow-skinned Jewish tyrant of Bolshevik Hungary. Harold Nicolson, who was assigned to this mission, gave this amazing report from the time they arrived in Vienna where the delegation was to wait for a Communist delegate to give them permission to enter Hungary:

I go to the Bolshevik headquarters. It is rather difficult to make them understand who I am and what I want. The place is crowded with people who want to obtain passports. Most of them are Jews fighting to get to Budapest... Finally I am taken upstairs to the commissar, as he is called around here. He is a Galician Jew raised in the United States. He telephones Budapest and says: "It's O.K. Bela Kun will be glad to see you."

The next morning the delegation arrived in Budapest as the same time as 1,500 "fanatics" who had left Vienna to join Bela's Red guards. Bela Kun appeared on the platform:

He is a little man of about thirty, his face is waxy and puffy, his lips are soft and wet, his head is shaven, his eyes are cunning and distrustful. It is the face of a sulking and insecure criminal. He is accompanied by a greasy little Jew clad

in a moth-eaten fur coat and wearing a dirty green tie; it's his foreign minister. We start talking but his German is difficult to follow because it is mixed with Galician and Magyar. They start to propound on what Bolshevism will mean for Central Europe: Work and happiness for all, free education, doctors, George Bernard Shaw, suburban gardens, lots of music and the triumph of the machine. I asked them what machine? He gestures vaguely in a collective embrace of all the world's machines.

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Bela Kun left and Nicolson started to take photographs.

> Fortunately, Bela Kun is leaving before my patience gets completely exhausted. I accompany him back to the entrance of the station. The Red Guards do not salute him. He stands still and looks. The engine driver from a local train gets down and walks toward Bela Kun. He says something I do not understand. Kun answers him in Magyar, the equivalent of, "Certainly, comrade," and gives him the cigarette he was smoking. The engine driver then picks up another cigarette, lights it with the one he had received from Kun. He then returns to his locomotive proudly puffing his comradely cigarette. Bela Kun turns his beady pink eyes in my direction to observe if I have been impressed with this proletarian scene.

Nicolson summarized the meeting: "Bela Kun suggests we arrange a conference in Vienna or Prague between the successor-states. Smuts wants him to come to Paris." Here was the prime minister of a British dominion inviting the Jewish tyrant of a communized country to come and negotiate in Paris, while not a single statesman had been called to express the needs of 60 million Germans.

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Neither Smuts nor anyone else in the luxury train that brought the delegation to Budapest had the slightest idea of what was going on in Hungary under Bela Kun's dictatorship. Nicolson managed to drag Smuts along on a tour of Budapest for which authorization had to be sought:

> Almost all the shops are closed. The city is unclean. Rain is falling on people who are emaciated and in rags. Squads of red guards move around holding coat-hangers with various gifts. We met three or four of these squads of about 15 to 20 men armed with bayonets and carrying coat-hangers, stolen in some restaurant. If they find an open shop they go in and help themselves to the "gifts" they fancy, which they then hang on the coat-hangers: boots, sausages and red linen. All this is soaked with the rain. The sadness and poverty is striking.

When Nicholson and Smuts returned to the train there was a power failure, which plunged everybody into darkness. Bela Kun returned to the station:

> I managed to make him sign a paper where he promised to release all the English subjects he had put in jail. Kun appears suspicious and morose as well as fearful. Smuts speaks to him as if he were royalty. The Swiss and Spanish consuls inform us that Bela Kun's actions were far from moderate. To pretend otherwise would be absurd. The prisons are overfilled with people. The Red guards are threatening and a massacre is feared. Bela Kun returned the next day: he arrived at ten o'clock. Smuts hands over the draft of an agreement stipulating the occupation by the great powers of a neutral zone between Romania and Hungary. If he agrees the blockade will be lifted. It is clear that Bela Kun is dying to accept. The signing of such a document would imply the official recognition of his government. He badly wants to agree but he is suspicious and fearful. Grabbing the document he leaves us, saying he has to consult with his Cabinet, which actually means Moscow. He promises us an answer by seven in the evening.

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In the afternoon a reception was to be given to the Smuts delegation at the Hungaria Hotel:

Bela Kun wishes us to have afternoon tea there. It is embarrassing as I do not think the general would like us to go into a hotel. But they look so upset when we refuse that we accept the invitation. We realize as soon as we get into the hotel that everything had been carefully arranged in order to impress us. The lobby is full of people around little tables drinking coffee and lemonade. A band is playing Hungarian tunes. Everything is designed to show us that Budapest remains, despite Bolshevism, the merriest city in Europe. However, two serious mistakes have been made: first, each door is guarded by armed Red guards and, secondly, they forgot to tell the people around the little tables they were supposed to talk among themselves. It is very strange. I do not realize immediately what is wrong. It is a normal sight to see people having afternoon tea in a hotel, but there is something fantastic and unreal: no one is talking; everybody is sipping their lemonade in total silence. If one looks at these people one sees fear and an appeal for help as intense as it is silent. When they lower their eyes, the deadly silence continues except for the playing of violins under the watch of armed guards. It is quite evident that this collection of silent beings had been taken out of jail for the afternoon just to fill the lobby. I shudder. We leave as soon as possible. While we walk to the door, silent glances follow us.

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Bela Kun was to come back a fourth time to carry on the negotiations. Smuts had finally reached a fomula whereby Kun would be invited to Paris to join the peace conference. Paris, however, would not greet Bela Kun. The Hungarians had had more than enough of Bolshevism and Bela Kun and had called in Romanian troops to help them kick out their oppressors. Bela Kun was run

out of town, never to reappear. The Allies' exceptional display of affection towards Bela Kun was not unrelated to his Jewishness. Versailles was a kind of confidential Sanhedrin gathering where Bela Kun was eagerly awaited. Lenin's three Jewish dictators of Bavaria (Leviné, Levien, and Axelrod) had similarly been wooed and feted by Clemenceau and the Allies all the while they were massacring defenseless German civilians. Surrounded and invaded by enemies, the hard core of Germany was determined to resist. Noske was on his way to Bavaria.

Chapter 54

Germany Crushes Communism

From April 26 to May 3, 1919," wrote Benoist-Méchin, "all Germany held its breath, with all eyes on Bavaria." Leviné and Levien had just signed an alliance, with their fellow tyrant Bela Kun, all of whom were under the control of Lenin. The Munich-Budapest Bolshevik axis was going to cut Europe in half. For six months Bavaria had been in the hands of a series of demented Jews like Eisner and cold-blooded terrorists like Leviné and Levien, sent by Lenin from Moscow. During the night of April 6 these aliens had proclaimed Bavaria a soviet republic to cries of "Los vom Reich!" ("Out of the Reich!"). This was intolerable to any German. Bloodshed seemed inevitable. For the first time since the end of the war there would be a confrontation of major forces, amounting to some 64,000 combatants. The Marxist- Leninists of Bavaria, in power for six months, had had the time to organize a Red army of 64,000 well-armed men. The odds did not favor Noske's 4,000.

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The Communist International which supervised Soviet Bavaria was entirely composed of Jews. This point should never be foregotten when one studies the evolution of National Socialism. Jewish involvement in directing the Bolshevik revolutions in Germany had been overwhelming and constant. The massacres and the bloodshed that had almost destroyed Germany in 1918 and 1919 were organized and directed by Jews. It was a Frenchman of impeccable democratic credentials, not an "anti- Semitic" German, who wrote these remarkable lines: Crowds waving red flags mount an assault against the government in the name of class war. They try to crush the last patriotic instincts. But these crowds do not act spontaneously. They are led by a legion of militants and agitators. And who are these agitators? In Berlin, Landsberg and Haase, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg; in Munich, Kurt Eisner, Lipp and Landauer, Toiler, Leviné

and Levien; in the Ruhr, Markus and Levinson; in Magdeburg, Brandeis; in Dresden, Lipinsky, Geyer and Fleissner; in Bremerhaven and Kiel, Grunewald and Kohn; in the Palatinate, Lilienthal and Heine. All these people were Jews. (Benoist-Méchin, L'Armée allemande, vol. II, p. 216) That these people were traitors to Germany and had almost delivered it to Lenin at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919 were facts of history. There is nothing "anti-Semitic" in recognizing this fact: a historical explanation for the anti-Jewish reaction experienced by the near totality of the German people.

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Lenin spared no expense in bolstering Soviet Bavaria. It was his dagger in the heart of Europe and arms were pouring in. The Red militias had conscripted thousands of former Russian prisoners who had been freed by the German government. The terrified socialist president of Bavaria had fled in panic with his entire cabinet, leaving his guards to be massacred by the Communists. Leviné, Levien and Axelrod, the Red dictators of Bavaria, set up a system of punishment and reward. The 20,000 Red militiamen were paid 25 times more than other troops; they cost a half million marks per day. The ordinary people in Munich were starving; for them bread had disappeared. Everywhere one could hear the firing squads: salvoes crackled in the prison courtyards; the victims' bodies were left to rot in the open. Meanwhile the Communist warlords were living it up at the Wittelsbach Palace: "There is an incessant coming and going of people, some all dressed up and others in rags. The champagne never stops flowing and orgies last until dawn. The government picks up the tab for it all." (Benoist-Méchin, L'Armée allemande, vol. II, p. 285) Money was never a problem. The finance commissar, a 25-year-old former bank clerk, just printed more notes. Whenever money was needed to pay his private army of personal bodyguards, he just went to the city's banks and emptied out the private safe deposit boxes of their contents, which he then distributed.

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Bavarian President Hoffmann contemplated the looting, massacres and adequate weapons and training. Hoffmann knew Noske was the only man capable of confronting the Bolshevik forces, but he was reluctant to ask for thousand indecisive men, but these troops were poorly armed and relied on Berlin for their paychecks. He needed ten times as many troops, with adequate weapons and training. Hoffman knew Noske was the only man capable of confronting the Bolshevik forces, but he was reluctant to ask for his help, because this would be an admission of his dependence on Berlin.

Like Ebert in 1918, he kept changing his mind. Finally, he decided to take on the Red army by himself. On April 16, 1919 he advanced to within 35 miles of Munich, but near Dachau his troops were promptly routed. After this disaster Hoffmann let Noske take the initiative. As Reichwehr minister, Noske managed to raise a force of 30,000 men. Many former officers rushed to join as privates. He positioned his troops in Thuringia, on the Bavarian border. A 60,000-man Soviet army awaited them.

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On April 28, Noske began a systematic campaign of encirclement. The "Russians," as Lenin's three Jewish dictators were known, began to panic. As Noske's noose tightened, Levien and Axelrod fled to Austria, while Leviné went underground in Munich. Only Red Army Commissar Eglhofer remained at his post. He took more than a hundred of the most prominent citizens of Munich hostage; a number of them, including seven members of the racial-nationalist Thulegesellschaft, were massacred in a gymnasium. This massacre would trigger severe reprisals. Noske reached Starnberg; twenty-one Communists were taken prisoner and immediately executed. The next day the ring had closed to within 15 kilometers of Munich. Noske hurled his forces right into the city, where they linked up with students and veterans who had risen against the Communists. His troops attacked Communist strongholds at the railway station and the Palace of Justice. The last bastion of Bolshevism, the railway station, finally fell, and with it the Soviet Republic of Bavaria.

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The Communists paid a very high price. They were exterminated by the hundreds by their Socialist brothers. Noske was a Socialist minister; so were Ebert and Scheidemann. It was they who had overthrown the imperial government on November 9, 1918, without any consultation with the German people. Ebert and Scheidemann, who had trembled at the sight of their coalition partners in action, now ordered terrible reprisals in Berlin, Bremen, Magdeburg, Braunschweig, and Munich. In Berlin alone more than 10,000 people were put to death: it was Socialist terror versus Communist terror. But it was in Munich that the reprisals were the most sweeping. Red militiamen were executed by the hundreds, as were other Communist troops. Commissar Eglhofer was executed on the spot. The Jewish dictator Leviné, who had gone underground, was unearthed, court- martialed, and shot. Dead was also the old Bavarian system. Munich would from now on be controlled by Berlin. There would be no more Bavarian army or flag.

Bavarian soldiers would swear allegiance to the German Constitution, Noske's iron fist had crushed separatism along with Communism.

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The last two centers of insurrection were Dresden and Leipzig. On November 7 the Communists had risen in Dresden, Saxony. On November 10 they ousted King Frederick Augustus II and formed a coalition government with the Socialists. Unlike those elsewhere in Germany the January, 1919 elections had been favorable to the Communists, who had obtained 145,000 votes to the SPD's 45,000. The people of Saxony, however, had refused to go along with strikes ordered by the commissars. The Red guards retaliated ruthlessly, chasing workers away from factories at gunpoint. On March 10, an absolute Marxist dictatorship was declared and the massacres of "anti-state" people began. The murder of Reich Minister Neuring, who was visiting Dresden on government business,

was particularly gruesome. On April 12, a mob of Communists burst into the minister's office to the cries of "Throw the dog into the river." Within seconds he was badly beaten. The mob then dragged the minister, bleeding profusely, through the streets toward the Augustus Bridge. He was thrown into the Elbe River. The desperate man tried to swim to the shore. Just as he reached ground he was shot to death.

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Neuring's murder belied the charge that violence was a right-wing monopoly. In Dresden the murderers and the murdered were all of the left. The pink Socialist left of Dresden and Leipzig were quick to call Noske, a Socialist minister, to do away with their Red coalition partners. The Bolsheviks had at their disposal 25,000 Red guards, 400 marines from Kiel and 20,000 armed workers. The news of the Munich debacle and the mass execution of Communists was most perturbing to the Saxon insurrectionists. General Maercker was ordered to march on Leipzig in May. He was out-numbered five to one but he was convinced he could benefit from the fear that by now was gripping the Communists. As a competent tactician he used a military leader's two main assets: secrecy and strategy. The destination of his troops and materiel convoys was not even communicated to the railway personnel. In the middle of the night of May 10, Maercker's men arrived at the Leipzig central station. They fanned out across the city and took over. There was practically no resistance; only two were wounded. The Bolshevik commissars and agitators were arrested at the royal palaces and thrown into jail.

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Eight days later work had resumed everywhere. After six months of Communist dictatorship the people organized a huge parade to celebrate their deliverance. The pure sound of trumpets and the high-flying flags were proof there were still soldiers in Germany. Thus, General Maercker had concluded the national reconquest of Germany just as it was about to perish.

CHAPTER LV

Chapter 55

The Alsace-Lorraine Booty

The first territory to be amputated from Germany at the Versailles treaty would be "Alsace-Lorraine" (Elsass-Lothringen). It had been recovered by Germany in 1871 but Germanization had not been forced on its inhabitants. The choice had been left to them to remain French if the idea of joining the German empire did not appeal to them. The results were in favor of Germany: less than one-fifth wanted to remain citizens of the French republic. Even the anti-German Tardieu had to recognize: "Three hundred sixty thousand inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine (against 2 million) declared their wish to remain French." The position was the same in 1914. Men from Alsace-Lorraine had not flooded the recruitment centers of Poincaré: Only 14,000 had volunteered to serve the French government-not even enough for a division. The rest of the population had served with distinction in the German army from 1914 to 1918. The most famous of them was Captain Schumann, who was to become after World War II the founder of a unified Europe, this time as a French citizen. He would be backed by a fellow former German, from the Tyrol, Alcide de Gasperi, now an Italian citizen, and fellow World War 1 German combatant Konrad Adenauer.

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Poincaré had made Alsace-Lorraine the base of his political career. He had made of it an emotionally charged issue, devoid of reason or knowledge. To "recapture" Alsace-Lorraine he had sent 11/2 million young Frenchmen into the hell of the Western Front to be slaughtered. He was now determined to grab these German lands regardless of their history or the people's wishes. How would Poincaré respect the terms of the armistice? Wilson's Fourteen Points had never mentioned the "wrongs to be righted" in connection with Alsace-Lorraine. Here is what was mentioned somewhat ambiguously, as reported by the American delegate, Dr. Homer Haskins (What Did Happen, p. 12):

The Allies had accepted the Fourteen Points as the basis for peace. The points did stipulate the restitution of Alsace-Lorraine as well as the restoration of

Poland but also condemned the exchanges of population and their transfer from one country's rule to another without their consent. At the same time the points proclaimed the right of people to self-determination.

The "de-annexation" or "re-annexation" of Alsace-Lorraine should therefore have been preceded by a plebiscite. Clemenceau and Poincaré entered Strasbourg as victors with bands playing and flags flying. People came out to see the victors and watch the parade. Clememceau and Poincaré shouted at the sight of the crowds: "The plebiscite had been decided."

The British were concerned, as early as 1917, about French claims to Alsace-Lorraine for one reason. The German will to continue the war would harden: "If in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine the Allies persist in their present attitude the war will not end in 1917 or 1918." (Philip Snowden, 1917) During the same year Lloyd George had refused to attend a pro-Alsatian banquet in London for fear of compromising himself: "On the 14th of July, 1917 Lloyd George did not believe the question was clear enough in the minds of his fellow citizens to allow him to attend a banquet to which he had been invited by Alsace-Lorraine (French) representatives." (Tardieu, *Peace*, p. 264) Tardieu also touched on the American position: "For the majority of Americans the question of Alsace-Lorraine remained misunderstood. For them it was a country where people spoke German and that was enough. How many times have the Americans told me of their hope that France should be satisfied with an independent and neutral Alsace-Lorraine." (Tardieu, Peace, p. 265) Tardieu recalled a conversation he had had with Walter Lippmann, a member of an official "board of inquiry for peace" in August, 1917: "The idea of a plebiscite was so deeply rooted in his mind, the notion of a French Alsace-Lorraine was so foreign to him, that he had invented a system of fragmented voting, cutting up the provinces in a dozen parcels." Tardieu himself would not hesitate to impose this system of fragmented voting on Silesia in 1919 in order to satisfy the claims of Polish politicians who were allied to the French government. Tardieu had mounted a gigantic campaign in the United States to change public opinion. For more than 15,000 meetings, wounded soldiers would be exhibited to attract sympathy for "the captive provinces." The appointed head of this "Alsatian" lobby was a Jewish publicist called Daniel Blumenthal, who was supposed to move the Houses and Baruchs to Tardieu's viewpoint.

The campaign bore fruit. On January 8, 1918 Wilson, still as confused as ever, announced: "The wrong Prussia has done to France in relation to Alsace-Lorraine must be redressed in order that peace can be assured for the benefit of all." Although the term "redressed" was remarkably vague, Tardieu welcomed the statement: "Of all the Allies' positions on this essential matter this has been the clearest and most comprehensive." Tardieu obviously did not interpret "for the benefit of all" to include the Germans.

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If Wilson and the American people did not grasp the complexities of Alsace-Lorraine it was because none of the French politicians would reveal the secret

agreements they made with Russia in March, 1917, just before America joined the war. These agreements recognized all French claims to Alsace-Lorraine, both sides of the Rhine, and even farther into Germany if Poincaré so desired. Clemenceau's shout that "the plebiscite had been decided" without recourse to the ballot box had upset the Allies. They insisted the matter be dealt with by a three-member committee. Tardieu had great difficulty selling his thesis of a "plebiscite without a plebiscite." "I thought our claim to Alsace-Lorraine would not be the subject of debate, and that the solution was obvious," he wrote. (Tardieu, Peace, p. 269) But for the other members the solution was not "obvious." Finally the Allies gave up, acknowledging the fact that the French government had made their claim to Alsace-Lorraine a fait accompli. The Allies' disagreement with the French government was covered up in the treaty by a vague declaration stating that the two provinces "had been reintegrated under French sovereignty."

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What about the German people of Alsace-Lorraine? Would their right to choose be respected? Would their right to remain on their land be guaranteed? There would be no question of it. The French government would recognize no such rights: In all other cases the rule had been the right to choose to the benefit of the relinquishing state. But we have refused and eliminated that procedure. There is no right to choose in Alsace-Lorraine to the benefit of Germans. This right belongs to the French government, which can, by virtue of the treaty and the exercise of its restored sovereignty, confer French status only on real Alsace-Lorrainers recognized as such by us. (Tardieu, Peace, p. 271) French politicians would excel all greed in taking Alsace-Lorraine thanks to this exception to the rule.

Article 254 of the treaty established that the value of all public assets relinquished by Germany in Alsace-Lorraine should be carried to its credit by the reparations commission. French politicians demanded categorically that Article 254 could not apply to Alsace-Lorraine. "I demanded and obtained," bragged Tardieu, "that in spite of this formal article, despite such enormous (German) government assets as the railways, the French government will pay nothing." The German iron ore mines alone had enormous value. They represented 75010 of Germany's total production just before the war. But the seizure of German public assets would also extend to the private assets of ordinary German citizens. They would lose their businesses and any property they had in the region. "We had our right to seize all the assets of German citizens recognized. We now had the right to prohibit all German participation in private enterprises in the public interest such as mines, utility companies, etc., as well as the right to cancel all German interests in the exploitation of potassium." German potassium mining ranked second in the world. Never before in modern history had private citizens been stripped of all their assets and belongings by the victors without the slightest compensation. The rapine outraged many Allied delegates.

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As if this were not enough, Tardieu established a system of customs without reciprocity for Germany. He enumerated the other spoils of victory:

We would be guaranteed to receive for 10 years and at the same tariffs as the Germans the electricity produced on the German side of the Rhine. We would have total ownership of the hydraulic energy of the Rhine bordering Alsace. We would have the right to annul private contracts, which is exactly the opposite of the general rules fixed in part 10 of the treaty. We would also maintain on German territory the rights of Alsace-Lorrainers ranging from industrial property to literary and artistic.

The British delegate Maynard Keynes described the situation precisely:

For more than 50 years Alsace-Lorraine was part of the German empire-a considerable majority of its population speaks German. The country has been the center of some of the most important economic enterprises of Germany. Nevertheless, the property of Germans who resided in Alsace-Lorraine or who had invested in its industry is entirely in the hands of the French government without any compensation for them. The French government is authorized to expropriate without indemnity the German citizens and the German companies respectively residing and located in Alsace-Lorraine. The national, provincial, municipal assets-including the railways and rolling stock-went to France without indemnity. But while the properties were seized, commitments taken on their behalf, such as public loans, remained the liability of Germany. Thus the two provinces were freed and discharged, under French rule, of their debts before and during the war.

In short, all the assets of Alsace-Lorraine, representing 50 years of German work and investment, were seized without indemnity. Each German of Alsace was dispossessed of everything but his debt. And yet there was more. The French delegates claimed control of the German port of Kehl on the German side of the Rhine in the state of Baden. They feared Kehl would compete with Strasbourg, which they had just acquired. Again the Allies were astonished by such flagrant demands: it took five days before the French delegates could put Kehl in their knapsack. Wrote Tardieu:

If Kehl, once the peace is signed, were free to administer itself, Strasbourg would definitively be strangled. We asked that for a number of years Strasbourg had the time to organize and for that purpose the two ports should be under the same administration. There were many objections: Kehl was a German port and should not be admininistered by a French director. (*Peace*, p. 273)

Finally, Kehl was submitted to French administration.

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The allies had thought for a moment that the new masters of Alsace- Lorraine would be satisfied and their greed quenched. But Alsace-Lorraine had only been an appetizer. Victory over Germany meant for the French politicians the opportunity for vengeance and profit. Alsace-Lorraine had been on the politicians' platforms for 50 years. It was therefore normal for them that Germany

be made to suffer to the maximum, and that they should profit to the utmost. After Alsace-Lorraine would come the main courses: Saarland and Rhineland. There would be side-dishes in Belgium, Luxembourg and even and attempt to spill over into Holland. All these claims had been launcehd melodramatically by Victor Hugo in 1871 at the Bordeaux Assembly, where he lamented the "loss" of Alsace- Lorraine: "Yes, the day will come when France will rise up. In a powerful thrust she will reconquer Strasbourg and Metz. Only these two cities? No, she will take Cologne, Mainz, Coblenz and Trier." French politicians had fed on these lines since 1871 and were waiting for the "divine minute," in the words of Poincaré. 1919 appeared to be that "divine minute."

Chapter 56

The Rape of Saarland

The French politicians, heirs to the bloody Revolution of 1789, had never forgotten or got over the fact that the German Rhineland had been occupied by revolutionary troops for a few years. In 1814 the German Rhineland was liberated and returned to Germany. The French revolutionaries and NapoLéon had occupied the Rhineland for 15 years out of 2,000 years. Yet this brief period of history was sufficient for all French socialists from 1789 to 1919 to consider that part of Germany as irrevocably theirs. Generations of political campaigners whipped voters into a frenzy for the return of the "lost territories." In the winter of 1919 the heirs to Robespierre and Danton demanded the "return" of the German province of Saarland to the Republic of France, the "sacred heritage" the revolutionary cut-throats had invaded. While they were mass-murdering their countrymen in France, the Revolutionary apostles of terror had invaded the southern part of Saarland in 1792, 1793, and 1794 with equal violence. The invasion had spread to Belgium and Holland until the entire Rhineland had been conquered.

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The revolutionaries who had imposed their despotism on France with unparalleled terror had also imposed their domination of other lands with force and violence. The revolutionary propaganda was as cunning as it was hypocritical. They had local agents or their own bureaucrats pass motions of support for the invaders everywhere. These motions gave the appearance of a popular vote in favor of revolutionary occupation. Belgian archives showed how so- called plebiscites in favor of annexation with the revolutionary regime were manufactured: Only 1 or 2% voted against it. The other 98% who refused to go along with such a travesty were then considered to be in favor of the occupation. Based on the premise, "Those who say nothing give consent," the revolutionaries acquired vast chunks of European territory, from Hamburg to the Adriatic, with the apparent enthusiastic support of the local populations.

Tardieu was merely carrying on the war of "liberation" his revolutionary predecessors had started in 1789. The Communistic purpose of these latterday guillotine revolutionaries was cloaked in lachrymose rhetoric and pseudo-patriotism in order to generate emotions among ordinary French people for the "return of all long-lost Frenchmen."

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When Robespierre's favorite officer, NapoLéon Bonaparte, became emperor of France the benefit of the newly acquired lands was felt in his armies. The majority of his generals came from the north and displayed the Germanic qualities that enabled him to perform his epic conquests and battles. Historically the Germanic northerners had shown outstanding military qualities. The Flemish conquered Ceuta and Tangiers for the king of Spain. Brabant knights saved central Europe from the Turks in the early 1600's. The Brothers of the Sword and the Teutonic Knights protected Europe from the Mongol invasions. It was Germanic blood that provided for the defense of Europe as well as its leading military chiefs. One thousand two hundred out of NapoLéon's 2,000 generals were of Germanic blood. It is doubtful that without them he could have conquered Europe.

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While NapoLéon's Germanic generals were distinguishing themselves on the battlefields, his bureaucracy, the same which had slaughtered so many French people, was ruthlessly suppressing the aspirations of the conquered peoples. In Belgium for instance, André le Poigne, an autonomist leader, was beheaded and, in proper revolutionary fashion, his head paraded on top of a spike in the center of Brussels. Although Belgium had only 3 million people, the revolutionary bureaucracy conscripted 193,000 men. Fifty-one thousand Belgians died on the battlefields. I have read thousands of letters from Belgian soldiers at the Liège archives, but I couldn't find one showing any liking for such service. France's wars were not theirs and most were at a loss to know what they were fighting for, so far away from home. As many Belgians died in those wars as during four years of combat in World War I.

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NapoLéon's bureaucracy even interfered with the church in Belgium. The archbishop was part of government intelligence and all his bishops were French nationals. Native clergymen who objected were sent into exile or even to forced labor.

The oppression by French bureaucracy must, however, not obscure NapoLéon's grandiose attempt to unify Europe while there was still time. A true genius is generally recognized only a generation later. NapoLéon's enemies would not let him accomplish this mission. Had he succeeded, Europe would be the world's greatest power.

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What was, however, contemptible in 1919 was the attempt of petty backwater politicians to cloak themselves with the imperial mantle to sell their mediocre politics. Saarland had never been French, despite being occupied from 1792 to 1814 by the revolutionary French regime. It certainly would be even less likely to become so after four years of war against France. It was most misleading to tell Wilson how much the people of Saarland wanted to be annexed by France. Wilson was quite confused on the issue, and his lack of historical knowledge did not help to clarify his mind. Tardieu aided and abetted Wilson's confusion with incessant demands that Saarland be returned to the fatherland: "It was hard work [to convince Wilson] since France had not officially claimed Saarland during the war." (Tardieu, Peace, p. 278) So it was now that Saarland, occupied by France for fewer than 20 of the 2,000 years of its history, had become, in Tardieu's memorandum, "French land of long standing, torn away from France without consultation with its inhabitants." The will of the people of Saarland would manifest itself in 1935, after 17 years of occupation, when over 90% of them voted not to be "reunited" with France.

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The other Allies could hardly believe their ears. They knew that Clemenceau and Tardieu had something else in mind besides embracing long-lost brothers. Financial interests behind the French government had their eyes on the modern coal mines, which extracted 17 million tons of coal per year, with reserves estimated at 17 billion tons. Tardieu specified his claim on the Saarland industrial complex: "The working mines, the unmined coal, all the attendant industries such as steelworks, foundries, factories etc." As for the privately owned mines: "They would be bought by the German government, which would pay the mines' owners, and then would be handed over to the French government." Wilson found these claims exorbitant: "I am ready to recognize that France should have the use of the mines for a limited time." He was totally opposed to their transfer to the French government. "He agreed," lamented Tardieu, "that we could take enough coal to compensate us our loss of production during the war, but he refused us ownership of the mines." On March 28, 1919 the difference of opinion became nasty. Wilson: "So if you do not obtain what you want you will refuse to act in concert with us. Do you want to see me go back to America?" Clemenceau: "No, I'm the one who is going to leave." He thereupon made a theatrical exit from the conference.

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Wilson's position was very complex. His health was failing; the Senate was awaiting his return to attack him. Was he to forfeit his policy over a matter of German mines? After three days of migraine and painful deliberation Wilson once again relented. On March 31 he let Clemenceau have the Saarland mines and industries. No sooner had this enormous concession been extracted from Wilson than Clemenceau began to demand the whole Saarland. Tardieu came out with the same old refrain: "This soil had been incorporated into France, one and indivisible, given freely and with their consent." Wilson threw up his arms:

"We are creating a new Alsace-Lorraine situation! France has never mentioned in any public document its intention of going back to the 1814 border. The basis for peace, accepted by the French government, referred to reparation of wrongs inflicted in 1871 and not in 1815. This basis is what links the Allies." Wilson concluded: "The border of 1814 did not correspond to any economic reality. To give away such a territory without an immediate plebiscite would be inadmissible." (Tardieu, Peace, p. 291) Once more acrimonious deliberations followed. On April 6 the American press reported: "Clemenceau demands more annexations." On the 7th Wilson ordered the George Washington at Brest be readied to take him home.

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Clemenceau and Tardieu were concerned about Wilson's intended sudden departure. Wrote Tardieu: "We are considering the gravity of a negative decision. Yet we have decided not to yield." (Tardieu, Peace, P 300) In theory, however, they would give the appearance of yielding. Exploiting Wilson's pet policy of self-determination. Clemenceau promised to hold a plebiscite in Saarland-in 15 years' time. Nevertheless, Wilson accepted the formula. Tardieu and Clemenceau were elated and sent this flattering note to Wilson: "The French government is ready to complete the proposals as suggested by President Wilson." Thus 660,000 Germans would be placed under foreign rule for 15 years, without being asked their opinion. Tardieu knew that a plebiscite after the war would have been overwhelmingly defeated. He estimated fifteen years were necessary to transform the ethnic and social structure of Saarland. There was in fact no concession to Wilson, but a maneuver to gain time. Tardieu admitted: "Under the burden of a century of Prussian oppression an immediate plebiscite would have been perverted. The French of Saarland would have been sacrificed forever." Tardieu counted 150,000 French people in Saarland, a totally inflated figure cooked up for Wilson's benefit. But by 1935 many Germans would have been expelled, many French bureaucrats would have been imported, electoral laws would have been amended. Saarland would now come under the control of a government commission controlled by French politicians. An international occupation force composed of Italian, British and French soldiers would keep "order." During these 15 years no German politician or minister, even the chancellor, would be allowed to set foot in Saarland. The French journalist Hervé wrote on May 31, 1919: We are taking over the Saarland mines and in order not to be hindered in our exploitation, we are forming a small distinct state for the 600,000 Germans living in the mining area. At the end of 15 years we will try with a plebiscite to bring them to declare themselves French. We know what that means: for 15 years we are going to manipulate them and harass them, until we obtain from them this declaration. We know very well it is just an attempt to annex 600,000 Germans.

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Lloyd George told Wilson: "Mr. President, I believe this is an excellent plan." Wilson somewhat sardonically replied: "Why don't you apply it to Ireland?"

The plan included an administrative commission presided over by a French bureaucrat and composed of a Belgian, a Dane, a Canadian and only one German. Germany was forbidden to take part in the political life of Saarland. Saarlanders would be prohibited from serving in the German congress and the commission had the right to expel any public servant it felt undesirable.

On April 9, Tardieu asked Wilson, in almost an ultimatum: 1) Will German sovereignty be suspended? 2) Will the commission have full powers? 3) Will the election [of Saarlanders] to the Reichstag be abolished? (Tardieu, Peace, p. 304)

Wilson agreed on all points. The next day Tardieu stated, "Our committee had drafted the 46 articles of Section IV of the Versailles Treaty concerning Saarland." The Committee of Four would accept them on April 10. Saarland was now to pass under the control of a foreign country without the consent of its population. Within months 700 German nationalist leaders in Saarland would be put in jail. Some were sent to hard labor and one was executed.

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A few months later Tardieu would summarize the takeover: "On the 10th of January, 1920, our engineers took control of the mines. A few days later the Administrative Commission would be officially installed in Saarbrücken." Fifteen years later, when the people of Saarland were able to vote, over 9007o chose reunification with Germany, despite the fact that Germany had been forbidden to campaign. As for Tardieu's 150,000 Frenchmen, on the date of the election, January 13, 1935, they were nowhere to be seen.

Chapter 57

France in the Rhineland

“It is not the fault of the Revolution’s armies if we are no longer in the Rhineland," Clemenceau had shouted on the Senate floor. After Alsace-Lorraine and Saarland, the Rhineland represented the third demand Clemenceau was determined to push through the Paris Conference. The armistice had hardly been signed when Marshal Foch had made claims undermining the very basis of the Armistice agreement: "No conquest or annexations" and "the right of self-determination for all people." On November 29, 1918 Clemenceau had praised Wilson’s Fourteen Points while at the same time doing everything in his power to bypass them. In the name of liberty, equality, and fraternity, Clemenceau would demand that tens of millions of Germans living in the Rhineland be placed under his control. Foch had submitted a proposal to Clemenceau whereby the Rhineland population could be incorporated in a non-German system. On January 10, 1919 he would officially declare:

1) Germany will have no military or political claim to the Rhineland.

2) The Allies will occupy the left bank of the Rhine.

3) The Rhineland will be linked to the Allies by a common customs treaty. [Subject] to these conditions and according to accepted principles concerning people’s freedom [sic], one can conceive of the creation of autonomous states on the Rhine’s left bank.

Foch was only reflecting the intentions of the power behind the French government. While ordinary French people were whipped up in a frenzy of patriotism and vengeful retribution against Germany, high finance was Preparing to clean up. Tardieu even appealed to age-old Gallic sentiment in claiming that the inhabitants of the Rhineland were long-lost Celtic cousins who were longing to free themselves from the Prussian yoke. The French leaders were now going back 2,000 years in time. In a similar warp of logic Minister Briand had as early as January 12, 1917 rationalized to Ambassador Jules Cambon about "retaking the Rhine Provinces which were stolen from us a century ago."

In other words the German lands that had been seized by the cut-throats of the French Revolution by force and violence had now become "lost provinces." Briand, Clemenceau and all their colleagues were left-wing liberals who considered the exploitation of Germany perfectly normal. The heirs of the French Revolution were claiming their heritage: "We claim the left bank of the Rhine as our lost heritage, which the French Revolution bequeathed us," was the political cry. Although the French Revolution had chopped off the heads of the king and queen of France, and the Bolsheviks had patterned themselves on these cut-throats. Briand had managed to convince Tsar Nicholas: "On February 14, 1917 Russian Minister Pokrovski had acknowledged Briand's communication (concerning Clemenceau's claims to the Rhineland, Alsace-Lorraine and Saarland). He informed the French government that his majesty the tsar totally supported its claims." (Renouvin, The Crisis in Europe) This Franco-Russian agreement of January, 1917 was so explicit that Briand read it secretly to the French in June, 1917. The secret agreement had been kept from the knowledge of Clemenceau's allies, and Lenin thought he would oblige the British by releasing the final agreement of February 14, 1917. In fact, both Lord Balfour and Wilson had known all along but feigned ignorance and indignation. Lloyd George would later use this knowledge to quell Clemenceau's ambitions. The British were very apprehensive that France would get too big for its boots, for they intended to keep both Germany and France in a state of inferiority. Suddenly, Lloyd George had his man at the Paris Conference, Philip Kerr, become the champion of self-determination: "Is it possible to occupy a land of 7 million Germans? Is it possible to separate from Germany all these Germans without consulting them? It is possible to fail the very principles for which the Allies have fought?" As for the "lost Rhineland," which Germany had in reality lost from 1793 to 1815, Kerr reminded the conference:

This historical argument has been abused. In all its official or parliamentary declarations, on December 30, 1916, January 10 and June 5 and 6, French government had never pressed such claims. Great Britain disagrees with military occupation and the use of its troops outside British territory. Furthermore, such an occupation could create nationalist reaction not only on the left bank but throughout Germany. It could create unfavorable propaganda in the Anglo-Saxon countries. The Allies' image could be tarnished, particularly that of France. Since Germany has been disarmed, is the occupation really necessary?

Chapter 58

The Rhineland Occupation

To Kerr's objections Tardieu answered: "There are revolutionary sentiments in the Rhineland. We will train them. They have learned a lot during the war-principally that France is the bastion of democracy." The idea of such a bastion of democracy swallowing up western Germany without the consent of its people was not without irony. Tardieu also tried to put to rest the fears that the occupation of Germany could lead to a revolt: "To this we answer that the Rhinelanders are only concerned with their fear of taxes and Bolshevism." (Tardieu, *Peace*, p. 193) There again Tardieu did not fear irony: his government was just concluding a treaty with the Bolshevik dictatorship of Munich. As for the Rhinelanders' fear of taxes, Tardieu would exploit it by promising them exemption from war reparations if they went along with his policy. He enumerated further advantages: "No draft registration, shipments of food, a customs union and banking reforms." Despite these tempting offers in a time of famine and misery, the Rhinelanders did not show any inclination to rush to France.

* * *

Tardieu did not convince the conference and ended his case unequivocally: "To ask us to renounce occupying [Germany] is as if we would ask England and the United States to sink all their war vessels. We refuse." (Tardieu, Peace, p. 193) Britain certainly could play the role of protector of peoples' rights to self- determination. The British had already helped themselves to 80% of the German fleet, and more than 1'/ million square miles of former German colonial territories. It was the height of British hypocrisy to object sanctimoniously to France's attempts to do likewise. Tardieu felt his claims were modest, compared to what the British had taken without the slightest discussion or debate. He presented his plan:

1) The Rhine will mark German's western border. Germany will renounce sovereignty over all territories west of the Rhine. 2) An Allied occupation force

would control Kehl, Mannheim, Mainz, Coblenz, Cologne, and Düsseldorf as part of the definitive peace treaty. 3) The territories on the left bank of the Rhine, with the exception of Alsace-Lorraine, will be transformed into one or several independent states. (Tardieu, *Peace*, p. 141)

* * *

Wilson had just returned to the conference table after a quick visit to the United States. He immediately let his concern be known: "How can we forget that when we signed an armistice with Germany we took on certain definite commitments. If we accept the Clemenceau-Tardieu plan we will trample these commitments into the ground and will be in open conflict with the Fourteen Points." Since Tardieu claimed his plan was only conceived to ensure French national security Wilson thought if the United States would gurarantee full protection to France perhaps Clemenceau and his backers would drop their expansionist plan. Wilson and Lloyd George proposed that:

The left bank of the Rhine will remain German and will not be occupied by an Allied force or a French one. Great Britain and the United States will give France the solemn undertaking to provide immediate military help in case of peril. (Tardieu, *Peace*, p. 196)

Clemenceau decided to finesse himself out of this embarrassing offer. He would pretend to go along with apparent satisfaction: "We greet with the most sincere appreciation the undertaking you have offered us and we wish to accept it." Wilson was all smiles until Clemenceau added: "But our acceptance will be on the condition that most of the guarantees we have asked be met and, to start, the occupation [of western Germany].

* * *

Just as in the case of the Saarland, where elections would be postponed for 15 years, Clemenceau would occupy the Rhineland unofficially. It was legalistic legerdemain, which left Lloyd George and Wilson somewhat off balance. Tardieu pressed them to ratify their guarantees, knowing the American Senate would never go along with Wilson's magnanimous offer. He was right. Lloyd George used the Senate's refusal to take French leave (or, as Tardieu would say, an English leave-filer a anglaise). Clemenceau was therefore free to occupy the Rhineland by default. He appeased Wilson's conscience by placing a time limit of 15 years on the occupation, but there again not without strings: "The occupation will last 15 years but with the option of extending it if Germany reneges on its commitments or if the British and Americans fail to meet their guarantees. (Tardieu, Peace, p. 221)

Tardieu insisted this demand be included in the Treaty of Versailles. Thus the least German infraction would give Clemenceau the excuse to send his forces farther east. This would happen the very next year, and again in 1923, in the Ruhr basin. The British Establishment felt it had been given a dose of its own medicine and looked for a way to defuse a situation it could not control. "As early as May, 1919," wrote Tardieu, "Lloyd George regretted acceding to our

demands, which he thought would start another war." The British asked the French government to reduce their occupation time from 15 years to 18 months. Lloyd George admitted: "We should never have accepted this long occupation. The whole project should be studied again. I accepted it, it's true; but since then I have convened the Imperial Cabinet four times and all the members agree I was wrong." By now Lloyd George thought the occupation would be "useless because Germany had only 100,000 soldiers and Great Britain and the United States would stand by France in case of aggression. The occupation is illogical because it will be 50 or 60 years before Germany is dangerous again." (Tardieu, Peace, p. 217)

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Clemenceau would soon find himself overtaken by even more demanding elements within his own government, who wished nothing less than the creation of a Rhineland republic, regardless of the consequences.

Chapter 59

The Rhineland Republic

Are the Rhinelanders Celtic like us?" asked Clemenceau. "I am not so sure; but there is no harm in saying it. But don't ask me what are the definitive characteristics of a Celt." He was ignorant of ethnology and of many other branches of knowledge. He was also a fanatically anti-clerical Freemason, who hated the Rhineland for its strong Catholic tradition. He had extracted the maximum concessions from Lloyd George and Wilson through dogged perseverance. He was going to impose his anti-clericalism on the Rhineland regardless of the consequences, but now he knew he had reached the limit. To demand more would have been the last straw. He thought there were more subtle and diplomatic ways to control the Rhineland than to create an independent state. He knew as well that the Rhinelanders were not longing to be under the control of his government.

* * *

Meanwhile Clemenceau had fallen out with Poincaré, the titular head of the French republic, as well as Marshal Foch, the head of the French army. Both believed Clemenceau either too close to the British point of view or simply too soft on the Rhineland issue. Poincaré and Foch had been brought up on the myth of the lost Rhineland provinces. During the Versailles Conference they openly sniped at Clemenceau's policy and decisions. There were also the activities of General Mangin, commanding officer of the French troops stationed in the Rhineland. He conducted his own policy for the creation of an independent state, sponsoring meetings of prominent Rhinelanders in Landau and Cologne.

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In April, 1919 Mangin had convinced a former Rhineland magistrate named Dorten to accept financial help in exchange for Rhenish separatism. Later on May 17 Mangin met with two Rhineland deputies, Kastert and Kuckhoff, and asked them to join his separatist efforts. The pair immediately rushed to Berlin to report the meeting to Chancellor Scheidemann, who was outraged as

such "blatant interference in the political affairs of Germany." This intervention would assume serious proportions. Wilson had also been informed of separatist machinations not only in the territory occupied by Mangin but also in the American zone. He sent Clemenceau the official report from the American general in charge: This morning General Mangin, commander of the French army in Mainz, sent one of his staff colonels to the headquarters of General Ligget, Coblenz, to ask what would be our attitude concerning a political revolution on the left bank of the Rhine for the purpose of establishing a free Rhineland republic, independent from Germany. He assured us he had some 50 delegates ready to move into the American sector to start the revolution. Although he did not specify who the delegates were, it appeared they were French. Wilson added to the report: "General Ligget has refused, and rightly so, to take this proposition into consideration. I totally endorse his decision. He had been given instructions to prevent political agitators from entering our sector, regardless of who gave the orders." (Clemenceau, p. 181) Clemenceau was stunned. These separatist maneuvers had been conducted behind his back. He immediately dispatched his own investigators to the Rhineland. They quickly confirmed that the incredible had happened. Mangin had even informed Ligget he had "no right to prevent the people of the Rhineland from exercising their will." Similar notices were conveyed to General Michel of Belgium and General Robertson of Great Britain. Lloyd George confronted Clemenceau in the middle of the peace conference: "Right now your generals are working at creating a Rhineland republic." While Clemenceau awaited the full results of his investigations he learned that Mangin's man, former Magistrate Dorten, had on June 1, 1919 proclaimed the Rhineland a republic and formed a government with himself as president. Dorten was backed by not only Mangin and Foch but by President Poincaré himself: "The president, " wrote Clemenceau, "was a discreet but resolute partisan of French annexation of the Rhineland, even if it was called something else." Mangin immediately asked Poincaré to receive Dorten in Paris so that he could "express the wishes of 12 million Rhinelanders." (Suddenly the number of Rhinelanders had jumped from 7 to 12 million.) Poincaré then put pressure on Clemenceau and the Allies: "I suppose the general would not ask me this if the movement were not serious. And if it is serious I hope the Allies will not force us to suppress it. This movement should in no way shock President Wilson." He then advised Clemenceau: "It would be unfortunate that we should find ourselves against this attempt at independence." Clemenceau felt his authority was at stake and took swift measures to demote Mangin and neutralize Poincaré.

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The Rhineland republic was thus nipped in the bud, but Poincaré would keep the issue alive in the French Chamber of Deputies: "In such places as Trier and the Palatinate there is a strong call for independence and in other towns the movement is growing. We can expect sooner or later some changes in the political framework of the occupied territories." (Clemenceau, p. 191) The "changes" would come, but not as Poincaré anticipated. On February 12, 1924 some 40 separatists met in the town of Pirmasens in the Palatinate. The gathering took

place in a government building, an act which infuriated the townspeople. A crowd massed outside and demanded the separatists leave the premises. When they refused, the crowd doused the walls with gasoline and set the building afire. All the separatists were burnt alive. Massive sabotage prevented the French troops from coming to their rescue. Communications were cut, trains stopped running, roads were blocked. By the time the French arrived all they found were the charred and massacred bodies of the separatists: "Some fifteen thousand people were crowding the streets. They had assisted in this massacre and were applauding it." (Le Temps, February 24, 1924) The violence was a portent of the simmering rage Germans felt towards their occupiers.

CHAPTER LX

Chapter 60

Luxembourg, Belgium and Holland

The Versailles Treaty had established a French military presence in Germany at great cost to the Germans. But many French politicians also wanted the Low Countries to serve as an anti-German buffer. Marshal Foch had his headquarters in Luxembourg, exercising almost as much power as the grand duke. Luxembourg, an integral part of the Low Countries until 1839, when it was forced to separate, had by now become used to its independence and sought only neutrality. The grand duchy had an army of 250 men and an arsenal of three cannon. The country was rich in iron and steel mills and depended on a customs union with Germany for its continued prosperity. The treaty had put an end to this union and the French government moved in to replace Germany as Luxembourg's new economic partner. As part of the treaty France acquired the German-owned railways of the grand duchy. (Article 67 of the Versailles Treaty.) Luxembourg had been drawn into a different sphere of influence overnight.

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The French government also wanted to reduce Belgium to a similar status. The French Revolution had plunged the country into a blood-bath equal to the massacres the revolutionaries had visited on the French province of Vendée, which somehow gave the present French politicians a proprietary interest in all things Belgian. Paris regarded the Belgians as half-French and never took Belgian sovereignty seriously. During the war Belgium had fought on the Allies' side but the Belgian king, Albert I, had attempted in 1917 to enter peace negotiations with both Austria-Hungary and Germany, which caused considerable friction with the Entente. The king said he was not prepared "to sacrifice what was left" of his army. The tension continued at the Versailles Conference because of Belgium's insistence on remaining neutral: there was no advantage in being the meat in the sandwich between Germany and France. The war had

cost Belgium 51,000 dead, as well as considerable destruction. Belgium received preferential treatment in the matter of reparations, but it was interested mostly in enlarging its territory. Since the fifteenth century Belgium had been whittled down by a third. United with Flanders and Brabant during the proud days of Burgundy, Zeeland, Limburg and Luxembourg had been lost to the Netherlands. Belgian ships were at the mercy of the Dutch government, which controlled the main branches of the Scheldt, which gave Antwerp access to the sea.

* * *

Tardieu was an intelligent and astute politician who saw great opportunities in restoring Belgium to its former size. The Dutch province of Limburg jutted out between Belgium and the Rhineland, and Tardieu thought a Belgian Limburg would be preferable in terms of ready reinforcement of its occupation forces in the Rhineland. Tardieu also saw the advantage of liberating the approaches to the great port of Antwerp from Dutch control. It was the gateway to western Germany from the North Sea. He decided to press Belgian claims to its lost territories. Although few people in France knew that such territories had once been Belgian before the 1839 treaties, the Belgian "cause" suddenly gained national favor in France. "The 1839 treaties, sterile and onerous, must be abolished," Tardieu told the peace conference on February 26, 1919. The Belgian government was not as enthusiastic as Tardieu and simply demanded the treaties be revised to remove Dutch control over the waterways to Antwerp and to return Limburg. More Belgian than the Belgians, Tardieu was instrumental in creating yet another commission to study Belgian territorial claims.

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The commission came up with three recommendations:

1) The 1839 treaties would have to be revised entirely. 2) Holland would have to participate in this revision. 3) The general aim of this revision would be, according to the League of Nations' objective, to free Belgium from the strictures on its sovereignty imposed by the 1839 treaties.

Within days these recommendations were adopted by the Paris Conference. "On March 8, 1919," explained Tardieu, "I presented the [commission's] report to the Supreme Council, which unanimously adopted it. On May 7 Germany was shown the treaty and agreed to abide by its conditions." (Tardieu, Peace, p. 245) Wilson was at a loss to see why Germany had to be involved in a localized Dutch-Belgium border conflict or how Holland was going to agree to revoke an 80-year-old set of treaties with the resultant loss of territories. Tardieu suggested a solution whereby Holland would be compensated for the loss of its Zeelander and Limburger citizens by receiving Germans living in the Ems region of Germany: "Holland could be compensated with the people of Emsland or the Guelder region, who are Dutch by race and tradition." (Tardieu, Peace, p. 246) Wilson replied: "You are asking that Germany hand over some of its territory to a neutral country. It may be right but it is difficult to motivate." Indeed, Germany had never infringed on Dutch neutrality and Holland had not laid a finger on

Belgium throughout the war. Apart from the fact that this Belgian-Dutch-German imbroglio did not take into consideration the wishes of the people, who were to be exchanged like so many goods at a bazaar, it neglected to recall that the 1839 treaties had been imposed by the British for the main purpose of thwarting French trade. The British had earlier managed to rally Europe against NapoLéon on the issue of French control fo the Scheldt river. In 1839 the British feared that the queen of Belgium, who was the daughter of the French King Louis Philippe, would bring back a French presence in the Antwerp region. Eight years before, Belgian independence had been saved by the French army fighting back Dutch troops who had invaded Belgium and were about to take Brussels. After eight years of negotiations the British finally imposed Dutch rule over Zeeland. The British Establishment had once more used Holland, as in previous centuries, to contain France. Now, after throwing its empire into a murderous war and savoring victory, the British were not about to grant Belgium its rightful claims, particularly when these were backed by France.

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King Albert I was an eloquent advocate for the return of the Dutch- occupied Belgian provinces. He was, however, surprised at the objections the British kept putting in his way through the Admiralty. Lloyd George was suddenly deferring in his foreign policy to the British Admiralty, leaving for himself the role of friendly neighbor. He agreed, after much Belgian pleading, to "modify the status of the Scheldt," but added that the Admiralty would never consent to any territorial changes. When Belgian Minister Vandervelde almost implored: "Think of our People; do not deny them their aspirations," Lloyd George curtly replied: You had fewer people killed than we had." The British rested their case on the counting of tombstones.

* * *

Tardieu tried to court the British by proposing that a plebiscite be held within a few years to determine whether the Zeelanders and Limburgers wanted to be part of Belgium. The formula had worked for Saarland, but this time the British made sure Wilson would refuse point-blank. The Belgians regarded Tardieu as a tireless champion for their cause. They had lost their fight for the restoration of their country, but from now on they would no longer be neutral. They were firmly on France's side.

To offset Belgian disappointment, the Allies decided to throw them a few crumbs, in the form of a strip of German territory (Eupen and Malmedy) adjoining the Belgian border, west of Aachen. In scenes reminiscent of the Saarland operation 55,000 Germans suddenly found themselves citizens of another country. Once more Wilson's Fourteen Points were swept aside.

The control of Germany's western frontier was, however, only the beginning. More was to come on the eastern frontier of Germany. The Allies would trade millions of people from one country to another in order to accommodate petty nationalistic greed and vengeance. Danzig and the Corridor, Upper East Silesia,

West Prussia, Posen, and Sudetenland would see their populations handed over for the disposal of the Allies.

CHAPTER LXI

Chapter 61

Lenin Saved

In the spring of 1919 few Germans recalled the spring of 1918, when Germany had overwhelmed the Leninist regime and had imposed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Germany was now licking its wounds after the bloody civil war Lenin had unleashed on its soil. Germany had been victorious on the battlefield, but was being torn to shreds at home by the new alien masters of Russia. Lenin had sent hordes of Liebknechts, Rosa Luxemburgs, Clara Zetkins, Eisners, Levinés, Leviens, Joffes and other agitators and terrorists to destroy Germany from within. The bloodshed organized by the Jewish Communists left the Allies unperturbed. They were too busy trading populations and bickering about reparations to assess whether the spread of Bolshevism would have any consequences for them.

* * *

Lenin had been saved from annihilation by the Allies' victory. Russian, Ukrainian and other victims of his tyranny had been about to liberate Russia, helped by Germany. The armistice arrived in the nick of time for Lenin and his henchmen. In 1917 the German government had released Lenin into Russia like a plague virus.The high command had known enough about Lenin's destructive capabilities to be confident he would overthrow imperial Russia, thus freeing the German army to meet the newly arrived American forces in France. It was a gamble the German government had to take. The eastern front collapsed, but Lenin's Communist plague nearly destroyed Germany as well as Russia. A few Allied personalities had shown concern at the time. Churchill warned: "Lenin is consumed by hatred. No Asiatic tyrant, even Genghis Khan or Tamerlane, has cost the lives of so many men and women." The French newspaper Journal des Débats wrote: "Bolshevism is a curse. If we do not take care of it then Germany will have to." In the spring of 1918 Germany had taken care of Lenin. The German army had occupied Russia's richest lands and controlled most of the food supplies, 7307o of the coal and almost all of the oil needed for the

survival of Bolshevism. "Russia," observed Churchill, "was at Germany's disposal. The wheat granaries of Ukraine and Siberia, the oil from the Caspian, all the resources of a vast continent would feed and maintain the German armies. Germany has in fact won all she could win." The Russian people had been massacred by the millions by alien, bloodthirsty commissars. They had greeted the Germans as liberators. "The German army," wrote Churchill .. .

. . . was advancing with efficiency and discipline. Small groups of trained soldiers occupied most of the areas necessary to supply Germany with food. Odessa fell on March 13, 1918, Nikolaiesk on the 17th, Kherson on April 8. On April 28 the Germans established a military dictatorship in the Ukraine under the direction of General Skoropadski. On May 1 Sebastopol was taken as well as a part of the Russian fleet stationed in the Black Sea. On May 8 Rostov on the Don fell. Five reserve divisions had been sufficient to control this rich and fertile region, as vast as a major state. (World Crisis, vol. IV, p. 101)

Churchill himself even admitted that the Germans had been greeted as liberators by the Russian people:

The Germans presented themselves as liberators and were spontaneously received as such, not only by the whole population, but by the most hostile patriots. A dose of Communism made any other form of authority desirable to the Russians. With the arrival of the German "steel-helmets" life had become tolerable. With order and calm everything had become easy and efficient. The soldier's stern discipline was preferable to the relentless persecution of a fanatic ministry of thugs.

As the Germans occupied Russia they created semi-independent states, which would form an anti-Communist bulwark. Churchill had drawn a parallel between Germany's conquest of Russia and NapoLéon's conquest of Germany in 1806. Both conquests had created states that co-operated with the conquerors. Churchill, who would later become an enthusiastic ally of the very Red thugs he was now decrying, was in 1917 considerably more lucid:

Under the direction of a victorious Germany, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, eastern Poland, Ukraine, Bessarabia and the Caucasus would be separated from a communized Russia and constituted into autonomous states. Their freedom, if not their independence, would be due to Germany.

Churchill's perspicacity proved correct. All these German-sponsored states had been saved from a Communist holocaust. Finland was spared further Bolshevik atrocities only with the intervention of General von Faced with the disaffection and revolt of the people he had enslaved, Lenin made a second desperate attempt to sue for peace with Germany. On August 12, 1918 a treaty was signed between Lenin and Germany pushing the Soviet regime's borders east of the Beresina River. The Communists promised to recognize the independence of all the new states, with the addition of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The treaty was a tremendous achievement for Germany. For Lenin it was only a piece of paper to mark time. He had introduced a new element of warfare: internal subversion

in the affairs of other countries. He was waiting for the results before resuming military control of the independent states. France's most famous historian, Pierre Renouvin, wrote:

Ludendorff wanted to implement a policy of expansionism in the East. The day after the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, he had advanced his troops as far as the Don and Crimean regions. By June, 1918 he was looking at Georgia as a potential pro-German country. With Georgia's wealth, men and raw material he perceived the possibility of establishing an action base which would lead to British India.

By July, 1918 Germany was well established in the Crimea. It had reached Kars, Ardahan, Batum, and their oil wells. It was at the door to Persia, Arabia and India. The German flag was flying from the Baltic to the Black Sea. This conquest had been achieved almost without combat. Despite three years of anti-German propaganda, the Russians and other populations had become friendly to Germany: Pax Germanica meant a stop to the Marxist massacres. Lenin had to swallow his rage. Wearing his cap of false proletarianism he would scream to the Bolshevik congress: "Yes, this peace is an unprecedented humiliation for Soviet power, but we are in no position to force history." Churchill echoed Lenin's lament: "Russia is at Germany's disposal." Germany's victory over Lenin was also Europe's victory over Bolshevism. The states that had escaped massacres were now enjoying the freedom to develop along their own characteristic lines. Their economic strength would be a buffer against Communist imperialism. All these states were as distinct as France or Germany. They had their own customs, their own language, history and culture. They were also part of greater Europe and a vital component in its survival. The Soviet Union was reduced to the limits of the old duchy of Muscovy. Churchill said Moscow could have been taken with 20,000 men. Lloyd George commented: "We are witnessing the collapse of Bolshevism." Lenin, who never gave any quarter, expected Europe to finish him off. His objective was to communize Europe and then the whole world, and there was no question in his mind that he was at war with all nations and states. The Europeans on the other hand were consumed with age-old and petty quarrels over pieces of real estate. Lenin's international Communist imperialism was quite beyond their comprehension. They had no understanding of Lenin's second front: internal subversion within their own borders. Because of this lack of understanding the various and fragmented European nations did not see the need to destroy Marxism-Leninism while they had the chance. The British-led Allies of 1939 would still not understand what Communism was about. In November, 1918 the only thing that stood between Communism and the rest of Europe was German troops and their eastern allies, the first victims of Communism. Churchill, who had not fathomed all of Lenin's ambitions, had nevertheless observed enough of Communist methods to declare: "Of all the tyrannies in history, Bolshevism is the most awful, the most destructive, the most degrading. It is not a political doctrine; it is a disease. It is not a creation, it is an infection." Yet this infection, which the German divisions had neutralized since March, 1918, was going to be unleashed quite deliberately by Churchill and his allies: they ordered, as part of the armistice, that German

troops abandon Russian territory in its entirety. Scores of millions of people would also be abandoned to the most "awful tyranny." The withdrawal of Germans was not made good by any Allied presence or commitment to protect the local populations. The Eastern Europeans could not believe the Western powers would let them be slaughtered by the Communists. In November, 1918 the French, the British, the Italians, the Americans and also the Japanese still had millions of armed soldiers who could have stopped the Soviet hordes. Churchill recalled: "All these new countries turned to the Allies with joyful conviction."

The lack of Allied resolve hardened Lenin's position. He rejected the Allies' peace conditons and particularly Wilson's Fourteen Points. He also declined to accept Constantinople, which the British government had offered in 1917: he needed nothing from the Allies. "Peace," declared Lenin, "must not be established by the capitalists but must be imposed on the bourgeois capitalists by the proletarian masses." (Churchill, The Great War, p. 328) The Allies were in for another shock. Lenin abrogated all treaties, contracts and debts that had been acknowledged by Russia before his coup. Billions of dollars had been lent to Russia for industrial development as well as to support its involvement in the war against Germany. The Allies clung to the belief that somehow Lenin would honor these commitments and were amazed when they never got a single kopek. Wilson was more indecisive than ever: "What is our position concerning the Bolsheviks? No one can say. My policy is to let them stew in their own juice! To send troops to contain them would be like using a broom to contain a high tide." Clemenceau's vision did not extend beyond Germany and was incapable of conceiving any other threat than Germany: "If Germany is allowed to exploit and colonize Russia, the blood which flowed for five years will have been spent in vain. If Germany takes over Russia politically and above all economically, Germany will have won the war." Clemenceau thought it preferable to see the victory of world Communism rather than let the Germans "get away with anything." Clemenceau's own government was at that very moment being undermined by Lenin's agents but Clemenceau was too obsessed with Germany to notice it.

Only Churchill had a clear vision of this tragic situation, but as an opportunistic politician he was careful not to express his opinion publicly. Instead he expressed his views in the form of a scenario dreamed by various Allied statemen:

We do not doubt it is not only physically but morally possible to take over Russia but the task is too big for the victors alone. To accomplish it we must enlist Germany's help. Germany knows Russia better than we do. Its troops now occupy the richest and most populous regions and constitute the only guarantee of civilization. Let us give Germany its chance. This proud and tenacious nation will thus avoid the humiliation of defeat. Almost consciously Germany will have slipped from our sworn enemy to our natural collaborator. Nothing is possible in Europe without Germany but everything is possible with Germany. (Churchill, World Crisis, vol. IV, p. 19)

Churchill concluded his European dream: "Germany would be invited to co-

operate in the liberation of Russia and the reconstruction of Eastern Europe." Churchill's dream would be dissipated by the reality of the mediocre politicians of the day. His dream was both intelligent and practical; he was realistic, while his colleagues were divorced from reality by their ignorance and pettiness.

CHAPTER LXII

Chapter 62

The Allies and the Soviets

The Allies did, however, make a gesture that might be thought altruistic. In July, 1918 a few puny contingents were sent to northern Russia by the British. The expedition was, however, not there to contain Bolshevism but to form an anti-German front. British business was concerned the Germans might yet topple Lenin and then default on Russia's debt. The British had more faith in Lenin than the Germans. They had sent the troops to lend a hand in case Lenin needed it, but this was primarily a public relations exercise aimed at resuming trade with the new rulers of Russia.

Another strange Allied foray in Russia was Japan's occupation of Vladivostok, Russia's far eastern port. The Japanese had joined the Allies against Germany because they saw considerable advantage in such a war. It gave them the opportunity to seize the undefended German territory of Kiaochow and the German islands in the Pacific as well as the Manchurian railroads and central Chinese iron ore mines. Both Russia and Germany were too busy fighting to protect their possessions. The war was a godsend for Japan's industrial and economic development. Its metallurgical industries increased their production fourfold; its steel output, which was non-existent before the war, reached 550,000 tons and its industrial output jumped from 1.3 billion yen in 1914 to 6.3 billion in 1918. The Japanese corporations were making so much profit they were paying dividends of from 20 to 50 per cent. While benefiting from the war, the Japanese government refused repeated Allied calls to send troops to Europe or even give naval assistance.

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Japan's economic emergence greatly concerned the American government. The United States regarded the Pacific as an American lake, and did not look kindly on challengers. The Japanese landed 72,000 men in Vladivostok, officially to counter a German offensive! The Germans were thousands of miles away but the absurdity of the Japanese pretext was emulated by the United States, which sent

thousands of men to northern Siberia, with the excuse of fighting the Germans. Officially the British, the Americans and the Japanese were only performing their duty in helping their Russian ally fight Germany. There was even a small contingent of 3,000 French and Italian troops sent to Siberia to reinforce their allies. Churchill admitted: "The Allies had gone to oppose the Germans but they never saw a single one, not even with field glasses, since 5,000 miles separated them." The Allied occupations were merely extensions of their imperialist policies but were in no way detrimental to Communism. Wilson emphasized at all times that he was not concerned with the Soviets: "Russia is a problem for which I do not pretend to know the solution," he said. (July 14, 1919.)

Meanwhile, the German army had been ordered by the armistice treaty to withdraw from all Russian territories. The Allies precluded the troops from coming home rapidly either through Lemberg, Warsaw, or Bucharest. They had to trek, in 45 degree below zero temperatures, some 1,500 miles, often through deep snow drifts, because their only authorized point of entry was East Prussia. Trains were numerous, but none were allowed to be used for the repatriation of German soldiers. The winter of 1918-19 was one of the coldest on record, and many men froze to death after sheer exhaustion had overcome them. The agony of this human wave tottering in the frozen wastes through the deliberate strictures of a punitive armistice did not move the Allies: it was all part of exacting vengeance against Germany and getting rid of as many Germans as possible, either through war, starvation, revolution or freezing to death. Armistice Day had been a day of jubilation for the Bolsheviks. The German front had virtually disappeared; the retreating troops could be attacked without retribution. One of the first German battalions to retreat was encircled by the Communists and captured. All the officers were shot to death, half the men were torn to pieces. The other half were stripped naked and chased into the snow; they all froze to death. For three months the retreating German army endured martyrdom. Crimeans and Ukrainians begged the Germans to stay. On January 1, 1919 5,000 German soldiers tried to save the capital of Ukraine but it was too late: the Bolsheviks were just too numerous, too well supplied and too well armed. Between October, 1917 and November, 1919, despite two years of civil war, Trotsky had been able to form a powerful Red Army. He had remarkable organizing ability, a keen intelligence, an iron will and a Tamerlane-like cruelty. Churchill called him "a crocodile." Trotsky had managed in a few months to create a disciplined army rigorously disciplined by ruthless commissars. All infractions were summarily dealt with by an ever ready firing squad. Largely made up of former deserters, former convicts, street thugs and illiterates, the Red Army was trained to give no quarter to those against whom it was unleashed. The Allies' order to Germany to withdraw from Russia loosed the Red army on the defenseless populations of southern Russia. When the Germans left a region, town, or village, Trotsky's troops would go on a rampage of death and destruction. Benoist-Méchin narrates the Germans' forced march from southern Russia north to East Prussia: It was a long, monotonous trudge through howling blizzards for the Germans on their way north. They would only reach the

Prussian border at the end of winter. It was the only point of entry allowed to them. They suffered far more than the survivors of NapoLéon's army crossing the Beresina. (L'Armée allemande, vol. II, p. 242) Again Churchill was one of the few Allied leaders to deplore what he called "these lamentable events": A clause of the armistice prescribed the immediate evacuation of the Ukraine by the Germans. This seemed very reasonable to spirits inflamed by the war with the Central Powers as well as to the Germans themselves, who had no other desire but to go home. In fact the evacuation pulled out from southern Russia the only sane and vigorous elements, who maintained a normal daily life for some 30 million people. When the [German] steel helmets evacuated the towns, Red Guards immediately moved in and set the dregs of society against the bourgeoisie and against all those who had shown cordiality to the Germans or the Allies. The Reds celebrated their arrival by horrible massacres." (World Crisis, vol. IV, p. 167) Thus was treated and abandoned by the Allies at the beginning of the 1918-19 winter, the long-suffering and great Russian people. From 1914 to 1917 they had stoically offered several million dead to the Allies of the West.

The British Foreign Minister, Lord Balfour, so preoccupied with providing a home for the Jews in Palestine, was a lot less concerned with the welfare of the Russian people. Bled white during three years of war, they had been persecuted and massacred by the Communists. Balfour gave them short shrift: "We have constantly told the Russians that we have no wish to get involved in their internal affairs." In fact the Allies, although scorned by Lenin, were falling over themselves to curry favor with the Communists. The Treaty of Versailles made a special provision to invite Lenin for a round of negotiations on the Turkish Princes Island. The offer gave legitimacy to Lenin and his Communist regime, which was enough for him. He did not bother to reply, showing his contempt for the craven and cowardly Allied leaders. He was now free to pursue his genocide of the Russian people.

CHAPTER LXIII

Chapter 63

The Hypocrisy of Allied Intervention

Lenin had heaped enough scorn and contempt on his suitors from West- ern Europe to provoke an unusual reaction from Lloyd George, who on April 16, 1919 declared in the House of Commons:

If, now that the Russian people have served our destiny by running so many risks, we tell them: "Thank you; we are much obliged to you; you have been very useful but now we no longer need you and the Bolsheviks can cut your throats," we would be nothing but cowards, abominable cowards.

Since Lloyd George's admonition had nudged their collective conscience, the Allies agreed to come, one might have believed at the time, to the help of the unfortunate Russian people. The British sent a division to Baku, Russia's oil capital, where 38 Communist commissars were summarily put to death. The press always promoted the idea that the Nazis had been the first to initiate the practice of shooting Soviet commissars in Byelorussia during the summer of 1941. In fact it was the British who practiced firing-squad politics long before the Germans. It was also the British Establishment which invented concentration camps in South Africa, where thousands of Boer women and children died of disease and starvation in atrocious conditions, a whole half-century before Dachau or Auschwitz were ever heard of. British interest in Baku and South Africa had the same motive: to protect the Rothschilds' exploitation of oil, gold and diamonds. During the 19th century the Rothschilds had the British government undertake numerous imperialistic forays to further their own interests. The Boer wars were a prime example. So was the British occupation between 1915 and 1918 of the Euphrates-Tigris region, Persia, the Arabian Gulf and the Hejaz of Arabia, which, along with Baku, would monopolize the world's oil industry in Rothschild hands. To secure the monopoly British troops were sent during the winter of 1918 to seize the railroads and Pipelines linking the Black

and Caspian Seas in southern Russia while the British navy was controlling the coastlines. However, apart from the execution of 38 commissars, the British did not use their troops to stop the Communists from slaughtering the Russians.

The British were in Baku strictly to protect Rothschild oil wells, not mere people. The British Establishment had, as usual, inveigled the French politicians into their Russian occupation scheme. Clemenceau was invited to sign, in the utmost secrecy, a convention whereby the British would cut the French in on some of southern Russia's choicest real estate. On December 23, 1917, 'two months after Lenin's coup, the secret treaty was signed by Clemenceau' and the British: French divisions would be sent to occupy Ukraine, in exchange for which Clemenceau would receive concessions in Bessarabia and the Crimea as well as in Ukraine-an area larger than France itself. The British Establishment had conceived this munificent scheme in order to divert attention from their own monopolization of petroleum in the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf. French politicians took the bait and dreamed of a thousand-and-one-nights empire falling into their lap courtesy of their friendly British ally. French divisions were rushed to Odessa to the strains of the Marseillaise and soon started on their march to Ukraine. The British had also talked the Greek leader Venizelos into joining the French expedition with two additional divisions by flatteringly comparing him to Alexander the Great.

From the start the hastily arranged expedition degenerated from the bizarre to the grotesque. The Ukrainian population stared in disbelief at these unfamiliar soldiers. They had accepted the presence of Germans because Germans had been an integral part of Russian and Ukrainian history for centuries. Millions of Germans had settled and prospered among them but they had never seen a Frenchman. Their amazement quickly turned to anger when they realized that many of their new "saviors" were not only not saving them from the Communists but were in fact forging links with the commissars. Communist propaganda, so seductive to the heirs of the French Revolution, had finally infected the French army. No sooner did the expedition arrive in Kiev than Communist sympathizers and agitators among the troops organized enough subversion and sabotage to force a hasty retreat. Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, was abandoned to the Soviets. Then came the shocking news that the French navy in the Black Sea had mutinied. The date was April, 1919. The French government was stunned. The mutineers were jailed, including the ring-leader, Marty, but, thanks to a left-wing press campaign, were soon released. Marty capitalized on his newly found succès de scandal. He became the darling of the Paris salons and got himself elected to the French Assembly. Marty's election was the sole result of France's expedition in Russia, apart from raising false hopes among millions of Russian and Ukrainian allies. In fact, the Bolsheviks used the French incursion as a pretext to engage in wholesale massacres of alleged collaborationists. Within four months southern Russia had fallen to Lenin. The Allies still had two Russian "fronts" left: Murmansk, occupied by the British, and eastern Siberia, occupied by the Japanese and Americans. The British pretext for being in Murmansk was to "stop the Germans," although no Germans ever appeared anywhere near

there. The same pretext was used for the Japanese and American presence. This last Allied occupation was complicated by the unexpected appearance in Siberia of 50,000 Czechs, called Bohemians in those days. The Czechs were former prisoners of war from Austria-Hungary who had been released after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Lenin had indoctrinated them and organized them into a separatist army destined to take power in Bohemia. It was Lenin's policy to recruit and train Communist shock troops, then send them back to their respective countries to impose Communism. The Allies and the Communists made an agreement to repatriate the rearmed Czechs from the Siberian camps and throw them into battle against the Germans on the Western front. They were loaded onto the trans- Siberian railways with arms and supplies. During the long journey the Czechs became unruly and started fighting and looting. At Irkutsk the Soviets tried to disarm them, resulting in a full- scale mutiny. The Czechs had now turned against their Soviet mentors and were acting as something akin to free booters. By now they were only interested in reaching the Pacific coast and boarding ships to abandon the war, the Germans, the Allies, the Communists and the anti-Communists. Their feelings were shared by the American soldiers who had been sent to the Siberian wastelands on a nebulous expedition to "save the Russians and fight the Germans." The two surviving divisions had been totally inactive and had no idea what they were doing in their frozen surroundings. The Japanese were busy fulfilling their objectives, which never included rescuing White Russians from the clutches of Communism. The anti-Communist Russians contemplated their "saviors" with a sinking heart. It was in these desperate straits that there emerged a purely Russian phenomenon: Admiral Kolchak.

* * *

Admiral Kolchak was an intelligent and courageous naval officer who happened to be in Japan during Lenin's coup of 1917. Kolchak wasted no time in organizing the anti-Communist Russians spread throughout the vast territory of eastern Russia. Within a few months Kolchak had managed to recruit more than 100,000 Russian volunteers across Siberia. His plan was to retake all the territory between himself and Moscow and link up with the 13,000 British troops in Murmansk and Archangel. There were also some 40,000 Russian nationalists who had regrouped in northern Russia and had formed the "Government of Northern Russia." If Kolchak succeeded in joining his compatriots and the British he could relatively easily drive the Bolsheviks out of Moscow and put an end to Lenin's dictatorship once and for all. Churchill was the only advocate among the Allies of a genuine intervention to save the Russians from Communism. Although the Allies had more than 12 million soldiers at their disposal they would only need to send two or three divisions more to ensure Lenin's downfall. Churchill estimated: "Twenty or thirty thousand resolute men could without great difficulty or casualties push rapidly toward Moscow, sweeping all resistance before them." (World Crisis, p. 236) Meanwhile Kolchak was advancing from the East, his anti-Communist army growing in numbers every day. He was sure of Allied backing, which was promised to him in writing.

In order to obtain Allied support Kolchak had to agree to stringent conditions, which were almost laughable at such a time. While Russia was being ravaged-more than 8 million people had died during the first eighteen months of Lenin's tyranny-the Allies had demanded that Kolchak act from the first day of his campaign of liberation as a Western-style politician with all the democratic trimmings: "Kolchak will be required to convene a constituent assembly, democratically elected." What the Allies had never expected the Communists to do they demanded from the nationalists, who were fighting for their lives. After two years of Communist atrocities Russia needed peace and order more than liberal politicking. Yet articles I and II of the agreement required that Kolchak issue the Bolsheviks with ballot papers. Article V obliged Kolchak to recognize the independence of the "Caucasian and Transcaucasian territories," which the British had penetrated after the armistice of November 11, 1918 in order to acquire Russian oil. Article VIII was particularly sordid. It compelled Kolchak to commit himself to repay tens of billions of dollars borrowed by Imperial Russia, which Lenin had cancelled in 1917. The article took no account of Russia's desperate economic plight or the fact that Jewish revolutionaries had emptied the Russian treasury when they took over and had spirited its contents to Jewish banks in the West, where it remains to this day. The Allies wanted oil and money as the price for helping desperate people. Kolchak accepted these mercenery conditions because he knew his reconquest of Russia would otherwise be impossible. After months of painful negotiations the agreement was signed by the Allies on June 12, 1919, just two weeks before the proclamation of the Versailles Treaty. Churchill deplored the lateness of the agreement: "If this major and public decision was wise in June, how much more it would have been in January. The declaration [of the agreement] came too late." (World Crisis, p. 183) The Allied declaration was in any case a piece of treachery. They had no intention of using their own troops to fight the Bolsheviks. If Kolchak seemed to be winning he would be supplied with army surplus and second-hand arms, but this would be the limit. The Russian admiral, however, was led to believe at all times that the Allies would join him in battle. The Allies' double-dealing was illustrated in a document outlining their plan of action, issued by the Allied Supreme Council on May 26, 1919: "Their only aim will be to assist Russian elements seeking to pursue the struggle against German autocracy and the liberation of their own country." "The struggle against German autocracy" was sheer nonsense, considering that the war with Germany was over and that the Murmansk region had never had, even during the war years, to deal with such an "autocracy." Since 1917 only Soviet troops had been stationed on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. And the British appealed to Kolchak in June, 1919 to attack them. The British had promised to fight on the side of the Russian nationalists as the main incentive for Kolchak to start combat. The Allies would send some 300,000 obsolete rifles, left-overs from the war for which they had no further use, but were determined to stay out of the fighting. Churchill understated the position when he wrote: "The decision to support Kolchak was taken half-heartedly."

Allied hypocrisy and vacillation was matched by Lenin's rage. He swore: "From now on there will no longer be a world war; there will be a universal war."

Lord Curzon in his memoirs deplored the Allies's craven response: Our policy is incoherent . . . It is in fact non-existent. The Allies have dithered between gratitude and courteous indifference to the [nationalist] Russians. This policy has been shifting and uncertain. We can expect serious trouble or worse. On July 29, 1919 Churchill reminded the House of Commons: We are bound by solemn commitments to the Russians, who have been our allies as well as the populations we have encouraged [in resisting Communism]. The tradition of our country had always been to pay particular attention to this type of thing.

Churchill, of course, discounted the institutionalized hypocrisy of the British Establishment with its built-in policy of welching on agreements. Kolchak was unaware of the Allies' deviousness and was fighting his way to meet the British at Murmansk. In the middle of the campaign Kolchak was informed that the British were preparing to leave Murmansk before winter. Britain was having an election and politicians who had whipped up war hysteria for four years were now running on a peace platform: casualties had hit home, and the voters were sick of war. The news did little for the morale of the Russians patriots, but they continued their fight. After retreating to Perm, Kolchak nevertheless once again took the offensive and breached the Soviet lines to a depth of 150 miles. Perhaps the Allies would be impressed by Russian bravery.

CHAPTER LXIV

Chapter 64

The Allies Betray Kolchak

Admiral Kolchak followed his offensive by penetrating hundreds of more miles inside Soviet-held territory. It was at this very moment that the British government ordered all its troops out of Murmansk and Archangel. The Allied Supreme Council also reneged on its agreement to supply arms and food: all supplies were cut off. A horrible event compounded the Allied betrayal: as Kolchak was about to liberate Ekaterinburg, Trotsky's Jewish guard massacred in the most savage manner the Tsar, his wife and all his children, whom they held captive in a cellar. It was a ritualistic murder of unparalleled horror. The news sent shockwaves throughout Russia but only strengethened the resolve of the anti-Communist forces to fight, if only to avoid a similar fate. Significantly, Ekaterinburg was renamed Sverdlovsk late after Trotsky's Jewish henchman in the murder, Sverdlovsk. Churchill, who was war minister at the time, somehow decided to ignore the Allied Supreme council. Alone among all the Allies, he ordered the British navy to appear in Petrograd's harbor. The British sank two Soviet cruisers and were waiting for Finland to move in on Petrograd. Kenin knew all was lost: Finland was fully mobilized, the British navy controlled the harbor and Russian nationalists under the command of General Yudenich were poised to attack. The destruction of Communism seemed inevitable. As in the past and so many times in the future, Communism was to be saved from certain annihilation by the capitalist powers. All the pressure the capitalists could muster was exerted on Finland to abandon its attack; Yudenich's supplies were sabotaged and Churchill reined in. The accumulation of betrayal finally took its toll on the nationalist forces. The momentum was lost: A jubilant Lenin, saved by his capitalist "enemies," resumed his genocidal war against the Russian people. In a desperate counterattack the Russian patriots wiped out six Communist battalions on August 10, 1919: 2,000 Reds had been killed and 18 mortar guns taken. But nothing that Kolchak was able to do moved the Allies to help. In the gilded offices of the capitalist governments the word was out that now was the time to reach a permanent accommodation with the Communists.

Churchill waved an accusing finger at his colleagues:

From the bottom of your armchairs it seems easy to leave Russia and cut your losses. But how do you face the families who gave hospitality to the [British] troops and the Russian soldiers who fought on your side and the independent government created with your backing? How difficult and painful it is to cut such links.

As if to appease a bad conscience Churchill authorized those Russians who wanted to escape the coming genocide to board British ships out of Murmansk and Archangel. However, most of the Northern Russian Government members and the bulk of the patriotic troops remained on their native soil to face the enemy. On October 12 the last British vessel disappeared. Betrayed and without supplies the Russians nevertheless resisted heroically for a month. Finally they were overwhelmed by the sheer number of the Communist troops. It was a total massacre: the Russian officers taken prisoners were shot at the rate of 500 per day. Churchill recalled the tragedy:

I can still see the pale faces and still eyes of a deputation of Archangel citizens ... They asked the British protection be maintained but I could only have given them a miserable answer. A few weeks later all these poor workers and shopkeepers would be facing a firing squad. The responsibility for this falls on the powerful and enlightened nations which after having won the war did not finish their tasks.

While the people of Russia were being massacred or enslaved by an alien tyranny, the Treaty of Versailles was pontificating on the right of self- determination for all people.

After the collapse of the Ukrainian, Finnish and Arctic fronts the only remaining Allies the Russians had were the 50,000 Czechs in eastern Siberia. The Japanese, the Americans and their satellites remained cautiously on the sidelines around the Vladivostok region. Admiral Kolchak was trying to coordinate the unruly and fractious Czechs with his anti-Communist forces, which were themselves divided between disaffected socialists and old tsarist loyalists. The Allies who had betrayed Kolchak in the west still had the nerve to pressure him into organizing elections. Kolchak reminded these "champions of democracy" that when elections had been held after Lenin's 1917 coup the Communists had only received 25% of the votes, and that the following day Lenin had dissolved the congress. Democracy had lasted only for 12 hours. Since then, the dictatorship of the proletariat had drowned the voters in a sea of blood. In order to have elections, Kolchak explained, the country should be out of range of the Communist firing squads.

For the Allied politicians elections were nothing but a passport to the good life. It meant a long paid vacation, nurtured on lies, false promises, corruption, political auctions and vacuous verbiage. They could not conceive of anyone not wanting such unlimited benefits. The Allies still flashed the hope of help in Kolchak's eyes-if only he conformed to the democratic rituals. The British

sent a left-wing socialist politician named John Ward to Kolchak's headquarters. Ward was blunt: "No elections, no guns!" In the middle of a war to the death with the Communists, here was Kolchak being blackmailed by the hypocrites who just betrayed him in the west. Meanwhile the Czech army had been placed under Allied command. A French general, Janin, was put in charge. The behavior of both the Czechs and Janin was disquieting. Churchill commented: At the beginning of 1919 the Czechs were no longer a help but a danger. They had committees like those who had undermined the Russian army after the revolution. Military discipline and valor were on the wane. It became necessary to withdraw them from the front and put them to guard the railways. Thus the Russians' last ally had been withdrawn from the Siberian front. The British Middlesex and Hampshire regiments would also be withdrawn from Vladivostok on September 8, 1919, and November 1 respectively. "Their departure," said Churchill, "sealed Kolchak's defeat." The Czechs protecting the trans-Siberian railways had learned that Kolchak's own train was carrying 1,500,000 gold rubles which had been salvaged from Trotsky's grasp. They saw immediately an opportunity to use both Kolchak and the gold to bargain their way out of the coming Communist inferno. Instead of fulfilling their orders to ensure the safe passage of Kolchak to the east they sent a delegation headed by General Janin-appointed by the Allied Supreme Council-to negotiate terms with the Communists. The Czechs had now changed sides five times. On January 14, 1920 General Janin cynically offered a sordid bargain: Kolchak's train would be abandoned if the Reds would let the Czechs reach Vladivostok without any trouble. Russian officer Malinovsky recorded the vile operation: On January 14, at six in the evening, two Czech officers declared they had just received the order from General Janin to hand over Admiral Kolchak and his general staff to the local authorities. The Admiral, always very calm, showed no sign that he feared death. His eyes were bright and, looking the Czechs straight in the eyes, he said: "So this is the meaning of the promise Janin had made to ensure our safe passage to the east. This is an act of international treason."

The "local authorities" referred to the Socialist government of Irkutsk. Kolchak and his general staff were immediately seized and handed over to the Socialists. They were thrown in jail and the next day the Socialists declared themselves won over to Communism and opened the doors to Trotsky's Red Guards. They rushed to the jail and massacred Kolchak and his staff. The Allies, "champions of democracy," who had so pressured the valient Kolchak to observe democratic rituals, were remarkably silent about this flagrant lack of due process. To those who raised some criticism, Janin had only one answer: "I repeat that for His Majesty Nicholas II there was a lot less ceremony." As for the gold, it ended up being shared in strange and byzantine ways between certain Communists and certain Czechs. Several months later a deposit of one million gold rubles was made in a San Francisco bank. Thus the fourth patriotic Russian front collapsed thanks to Allied betrayal. The last and only front was still holding in southern Russia, under the command of General Denikin.

CHAPTER LXV

Chapter 65

The Death of Russia

Although the Germans never reached the regions between the Don and the Volga, the Russians there had fought the Communists with great courage and success as early as December, 1917. Their first leader, General Kornilov, had been killed in action and was then replaced by General Alexiev. By September, 1918 the command had fallen on the shoulders of General Denikin. From the spring to the summer of 1919 Denikin had recaptured vast territories from the Soviets. He had taken 250,000 prisoners and captured 2,700 machine guns, 700 cannons and 35 armored trains. By that fall he was approaching Moscow-the new Soviet capital-from the southwest and was within a few hours' train ride from its center. During that time he had liberated more than 30 million people from Communist occupation. The British Cabinet reported on September 22, 1919, "If these 30 million people were given the chance to vote there is no doubt whatever a crushing majority would vote against Lenin's and Trotsky's return." If the British government was aware of the feeling of the Russian population one will always wonder why so much pressure was put on Admiral Kolchak to hold elections in the middle of combat. Denikin's success had impressed the British, who thought for a time he was well on his way to liberating the whole of Russia. The British bankers thought they would get in on the ground floor if Denikin won. "It seems highly desirable to develop trade and credit in the vast expanses of the liberated regions," suggested the report. The banks' desire became an order for the British government to supply Denikin with substantial quantities of arms and munitions. More important, however, had been the dispatching of several hundred British officers to assist Denikin under the label of "advisors," a formula that has been used ever since.

The "advisors" policy was always a half-measure, sending the wrong message to the people it was supposed to help. The Russians had paid the ultimate price for believing Allied troop shuffling and promises would be substantiated with real help. They learned, like all the other allies of the western "democracies" ever since, that they were totally manipulable and expendable. The mediocrities of

the democracies never had a clear plan to save the Russians; their vision was limited to feeding grubbily from the public trough or sweating out sordid deals. Heroism, valor, honor and vision (so courageously displayed by the Russian people against Communism) were for the Allied politicians so many meaningless words to be used in political rhetoric. Their Petty, putrid minds could never conceive that the Russians had sacrificed their lives for the sake of an ideal. The capitalists felt great affinity for the materialistic Marxists and were always hostile to people who refused the dictatorship of Marxism. Whenever the anti-Communist forces seemed on the verge of victory, the capitalists put everything into play to sabotage them. The Poles, the Finns and the Romanians also experienced betrayals similar to that which Kolchak suffered. Churchill noted: With some coordination victory would have been assured. Twice this year [1919], Finland had been ready to occupy Petrograd in concert with General Yudenich (and so were the Estonians), but was discouraged from doing so. Poland wanted to maintain a strong pressure on the Bolshevik front, but again we pressured her to desist. As for the small states, we told them to make their own peace [with the Communists] because we certainly would not help them. (Churchill, World Crisis, p. 256) For the Allies the anti-Communists who depended on their support were like so many cards, to be held until a compromise with Lenin could be worked out, at which time they could be ruthlessly discarded.

Apart from the vacillation, mediocrity and double-dealing of the Allies there was a very important factor that explained Allied preoccupation in curbing or sabotaging anti-Communist offensives. It concerned the reverses Jews were experiencing in the areas recaptured from the Communists. The violence that was committed against them was regrettable but not unexpected. The Russians had seen with their own eyes that the Communist genocide against them was run by Jews and that the Bolshevik Revolution was chiefly the creation of Jews. The first Soviet councils were more than 70% Jewish, the Communist leadership was essentially Jewish and the supreme commissar of the Red Army was Léon Bronstein "Trotsky," a Jew whose cruelty made Tamerlane and Attila look like angels of mercy. The genocide of Russians and Ukrainians by the Jewish-led Bolshevik revolutionaries had created strong reactions on the victims' side. The Russians had seen millions upon millions being starved, tortured and massacred by hate-filled Jewish commissars. Their reaction, once they were liberated, did not follow legal due process but was a spontaneous rage for justice: they had not started the genocide; it was visited on them by non- Russian aliens; they were defending themselves against the worst plague and calamity in their history. In 1918 and 1919 Jewish participation in the Communist revolution attacking Germany was also overwhelming and its victims felt a rage akin to that of the Russians. Russia's popular reaction against Jewish Communists evoked strong feelings at the Versailles conference, where many Allied delegates were Jews: Baruch for the United States, Klotz and Rothschild for France and Sonnino for Italy, among others. Caught up in the thick Jewish atmosphere of the conference, Churchill felt obliged to take General Denikin to task for allowing Jews to be roughed up by the people in the liberated areas. On September 13, 1919

Churchill sent an urgent telegram to his British agents and "advisors" in Russia: "It is most essential that General Denikin not only do his utmost to prevent the massacre of Jews in the liberated regions but also issue a proclamation against anti-Semitism." Another telegram on October 9, 1919: "Spare no effort to curb anti-Semitic feelings." Apparently the British agents were unsuccessful in manipulating the feelings of the victims of Communism, which provoked further rage among the Paris Conference delegates. The decision to cut off all aid to Denikin was then made. The delegates had never shown the slightest concern for the millions of people murdered by the Communists.

Churchill, nevertheless, became alarmed by the sudden aid cutoff:

The news of our retreat and our abandoment of Denikin will lead to his annihilation. The Bolsheviks have triumphed on the other fronts and Denikin's defeat would give control of the Caspian Sea to the Soviets. The resulting pressure on Persia and Afghanistan will represent a direct and permanent danger.

Yet relentless Jewish pressure and Allied cowardice worked for the defeat of the anti-Communist Russians and Ukrainians. For a whole year they would valiantly fight the Communists on their own, betrayed by the Allies and sabotaged by the Jews. During the two years the British were officially supposed to be helping Denikin, their entire casualty list amounted to one wounded "adviser"! "It was an illusion," concluded Churchill, "to believe that we had fought for the anti-Bolshevik Russians. They, on the contrary, fought for us."

As war minister, Churchill witnessed the fate of those Russians who had fought for the British against the Germans and against the Communists:

By July, refugees escaping the Red invasion of Crimea were stampeding in the direction of Constantinople. The boats could carry only half of the panicked multitudes. With savage glee the enemy massacred the last defenders. Smallpox and typhus compounded war and famine. These miserable shipments of sick, dying or dead people kept coming to the Turkish capital, already overcrowded and destitute. A cloud hung over this final phase. After all [this], death is a relief. And this was how the victors of the Great War had managed to solve Russian affairs. (World Crisis, vol. IV, p. 260-261)

This was really the end. Sordid interests, electoral politicking, cowardice and betrayal had finally overcome the most important people in Europe. Lenin had won. In Russia, Wilson's Fourteen Points remained as rhetorical as they had everywhere else.

CHAPTER LXVI

Chapter 66

Ukrainians and Jews

The Allies, after rendering Germany impotent, moved on to dismember the old Austro-Hungarian empire; the bulwark of Western Civilization for more than a thousand years. The dismemberment started as early as January, 1919, in Poland. An individualistic country, Poland had a strong history of war, invasion and internal rivalries. It had lost its independence on several occasions due to a combination of factors, which included geography, a volatile temperment and the presence of large numbers of aliens among the Polish people. But it was mostly this last factor, disunity, which spurred violent reactions among the Poles. These conflicts, which had contributed so much to Poland's misfortune, should have been known to those who wished to restore Poland in 1919. Wisdom dictated they should not be revived, let alone magnified. There would be no sense in establishing a Polish state in which nearly half of the population would be non-Polish. Wilson had gone out of his way to signal that there should be no annexations or trading of populations, especially in the ethnic patchwork of Eastern Europe: "The peoples of central Europe-and that had been approved in writing by the Allies-will themselves decide on their fate after due consideration."

Wilson was in favor of restoring Poland, and he established the geographic and ethnic limits of this new country: "An independent Polish state should be created. It should include territories inhabited by people who are irrefutably Polish. These territories should be ensured of a free and guaranteed access to the sea." The two basic points, "irrefutably Polish" and "free and guranteed access to the sea," were very precise. Yet more than 10 million non-Poles were annexed into the new Poland without being asked, and "access to the sea" would be interpreted as authorization to seize the land of another country. The issue of access to the sea might have been resolved in numerous ways, either in the form of a free port, transit rights or, as Marshal Josef Pilsudski had proposed with great wisdom, an internationalization of access routes in a manner beneficial to both Poland and Germany. If Pilsudski's formula had been adopted it is possible that

the world would have been spared World War II. Access to the sea did not mean seizing foreign territory or cutting a corridor through the territory of a neighboring country, thereby effectively cutting this country in half and denationalizing large cities against the will of their citizens. To do so was to create the certitude of future conflict. Many countries, in any case, live very well without seaports or coastlines. Switzerland, a land of freedom and prosperity, possesses neither a seaport nor access to one. Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia, some 20 Asian and African countries, and Latin American countries like Paraguay and Bolivia have no access to the sea. In the case of Poland the solution depended on a formula of fairness, objectivity and vision.

Unfortunately, the Treaty of Versailles was not about wisdom and reconciliation, but was motivated by hatred and imperialism. French politicians were playing politics, with a program of vengeance against Germany, expansion into the western part of Germany and a central European policy of interference. This policy created new states such as Czechoslovakia, which absorbed millions of unwilling people, and Yugoslavia, which was a construct enabling Serbia to rule over non-Serbians three times its own population. Poland and Romania would also be considerably enlarged with non-citizens who did not belong to them and who did not wish to belong to them. Clemenceau saw these new states as a kind of second front: states deputized by him to contain Germany. For once, despite his Fourteen Points, Wilson agreed with Clemenceau. Wilson and Clemenceau had had bitter exchanges, but the president went along with Clemenceau's plan to create a revived and newly bloated Poland. Wilson sought to curry favor with Polish-American voters whom he thought of as vital to future Democratic electoral hopes. The Polish plan triggered violent reactions among the Poles themselves. As early as January 1, 1919, no fewer than 30 different Polish delegates, all claiming to represent the Polish government, angrily stormed the peace conference at Paris: "For four days now," wrote American delegate Major Bonsai on January 5, 1919, "we have been suffering a flood of Poles." Since each country could only be represented by two delegates it was necessary to lock up the 30 rivals in the conference room of the hotel occupied by the Americans. "It was a terrible scandal," Bonsai reported. "They screamed for two ear-splitting hours until in the third hour they all had lost their voices. It was only then that two delegates were chosen." The delegates were the pianist Ignace Paderewski and a politician, Roman Dmowski. Wilson was anxious to promote Paderewski, who had lived in the United States previously, in order to neutralize Pilsudski, who had already assumed power in Warsaw. The saying, "Get four Poles together and you have five disputes," proved correct in this newly improvised Poland. Warsaw would soon become a boxing ring for guarrelling politicians. There would be coups and countercoups. The Poles would, however, be united on the subject of enlarging their country to the maximum. "Most of them," wrote a Wilson advisor, "only aimed at the biggest territorial expansion possible without the slightest regard to neighboring countries: eastern Prussia, Danzig, eastern Galicia (which was mostly inhabited by Ruthenians), all would be absorbed." (I. Bowman, The New World, p. 278) After having swallowed more

than 10 million non-Poles, who were violently anti-Polish, the Poland created by the Versailles Treaty would prove an impossible puzzle, eventually to be blown away within four weeks in 1939. The American delegate Professor Howard Lord had warned the Allied signatories: "The defense of such a state would probably constitute a burden for the treaty signatories. Consequently the more disputed territories given to Poland, the more trouble there will be." (What Happened in Paris, p. 68) Even more numerous than the Germans, hereditary enemies of Poland, were totally different peoples-the Ukrainians, the Galicians, the White Russians, the Lithuanians and a vast number of Jews-who would be thrown into the Polish potpourri. The Polish politicians were so voracious that for a few months Poland stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea, gobbling up some 30 million non-Poles in the process.

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Before the armistice was signed Poland, not yet reborn, had found its master in the person of Josef Pilsudski. Born in Vilna in Lithuania, Pilsudski was a radical socialist agitator who had been deported to Siberia and then returned to join Germany against the tsar. After the fall of imperial Russia he turned against the Germans and devoted his energy to the expansion of Poland. Becoming virtual dictator of Poland, he did not tolerate opposition gladly. He acquired neighboring territory by a mixture of force and cunning. The French ambassador in Warsaw described the seizure of Vilna, the ancient capital of Lithuania, with its 200,000 citizens: Pilsudski called one of his military friends, General Zeligowski, and told him: "With your troops, go and march on Vilna and take it. Stay there. The Allies will protest and I will blame you. I will discharge you but we will keep Vilna." (Léon Noel, German Aggression Against Poland, p. 51) Without further ado Pilsudski had thus put hundreds of thousands of Lithuanians under his rule. They had not the slightest wish to become Polish subjects and protested vehemently. But it was in vain; somehow the Allies did not hear these particular cries for self-determination. Pilsudski then rushed on to Kiev, annexing the whole of north-western Ukraine, although these regions had no Polish population. The adventure turned sour when the Soviets attacked the invaders and pushed them right back to Warsaw. Had it not been for the power struggle between Stalin and the Soviet generals commanding the anti-Polish offensive, and the help the French General Weygand brought Pilsudski, Poland would have been Sovietized right then and there, a full 25 years before Potsdam.

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Pilsudski had been saved by the skin of his teeth but his appetite for territory had not been diminished. The Treaty of Paris recognized Pilsudski's occupation of eastern Galicia, although the National Committee of Galicians had sent a delegation protesting the invasion of their country: The representatives of the Ukrainian people protest the annexation of a part of the Ukraine by Poland including the Ukrainian lands of Cholm, Podolia, and Volhynia. We consider it an attack against the Ukrainian people, a violation of its historic rights and a

mockery of the principle of self- determination for all peoples. The Polish Commission at Versailles told the Ukrainians that guarantees would be given for the protection of "the national rights of 3 million Ukrainians within an autonomous province recognized by Poland." In fact, there were 5 million Ukrainians in Galicia. To soften the blow, the Commission palmed off on the Ukrainians the old trick of the "delayed plebiscite": they could vote on whether they wanted to be part of Poland-in 25 years!

The Ukrainians of Galicia would never be allowed to vote on their fate or unite with the other Ukrainians. Ukraine, a nation as large as France, with 40 million people, was cut in half in 1919. The democracies chose to ignore their rights then-and have continued to do so, down to this very day. Another factor sealing the fate of the 5 million Ukrainians of Galicia was the recently discovered oil fields of the Carpathians. The British Establishment had invested heavily in the exploitation of this oil and felt more comfortable with Polish control of the region. The British and the French governments were suddenly vying for the privilege of being "Poland's protector." Wilson had asked Major Bonsal to see the Ukrainian delegation. On May 3, 1919, a month before the ratification of the Versailles Treaty, Edward Mandell House ordered Bonsal to burn the 10 volumes of the dossier he had been presented by the delegation. Bonsal threw them in the large oven of the Crillon Hotel. Somehow, the bulky documents did not burn. "Amazingly," recalled Bonsal, "they shrank and got brownish, a little. When I told House he said, 'I hope it's not an omen.' I replied, 'So do I but I have my doubts.' " Thus the legitimate requests of the Ukrainians not to be occupied by a foreign power ended up in the oven of the Crillon Hotel.

Jews were yet another group included in the new Poland of the Versailles Treaty. Millions of them had come from Russia. The French ambassador in Warsaw, Léon Noel, reported: "The Tsar's government favored the departure of Jews from western Russia. They landed in the 'land of the Vistula,' as the Russian bureaucracy called Poland. The Jews of Russian origin were very foreign to the Poles." Noel described the state of the Jewish population in Poland:

Who has not traveled across the Polish countryside between the two wars without seeing Jews crawling in every village, every town, every city? Living off the Christian population. These inumerable Jews, dirty, hairy and sallow, could be seen either rushing to make money or standing in front of their shops or hovels lost in some messianic or money scheme. No one who hasn't seen this well ever understand what the Jewish problem in Europe was. In Poland the Jews had monopolized the fur, leather and clothing trade. In Warsaw they were in finance, usury, antique shops, department stores; they were bankers, lawyers and doctors. They controlled agriculture as middlemen ... Poles were driven out of business by Jewish practices and anti-Semitism was growing rapidly. In many cases Jews were responsible for the conflict. They were arrogant and showed open contempt for the Christians. They went out of their way to provoke the Poles. The Jewish problem seemed insoluble. The Jews were too numerous to be assimilated. In any case they did not want assimilation; they were tied to their own practices and to their ghettos. In the town of Gdynia they would not

socialize with the Poles; they stood apart from Polish life. They spoke Yiddish, which they wrote in Hebraic characters. It was an alien world in the midst of Poland. Poland could have been spared such a problem if its politicians had not absorbed neighboring lands and with them millions of unassimilable Jews. At the beginning of 1919 the President of the Polish Ministerial Council, Roman Dmowski, also a delegate to the peace conference at Paris, would make startling statements to the world assembly: "These Oriental Jews form a very particular group. Their activities are causing much distress with those who have to live near them on a daily basis." The Polish delegate added: "If we do not impose certain restrictions very quickly, all our lawyers, doctors and businessmen will be Jews." The Poles had not waited for the Nuremberg laws to demand protection from Jewish practices; they demanded it at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The American delegate Isaiah Bowman illustrated Polish laws governing Polish-Jewish relations: In Galicia, for example, Jews were forbidden by law to engage in trading grain, alcohol and salt. Christians were not allowed to employ Jews. One must also say that the Jews represented 14% of the Russian-Polish population, yet they were 84% of the businessmen, 20% of the writers, 51% of the teachers, 24% of the doctors while only 2% were farmers, workers and miners.

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Pilsudski, by doubling the number of Jews under his control, had only doubled Poland's problems. The Jews of Poland had never assimilated and the influx of some 2 additional millions made any solution impossible. The U.S. delegates, headed by Mandell House, were instructed to convince the Poles of the benefits of Jewish immigration. They mentioned that New York alone had more Jews than the whole of the new Poland and went on to list all the Jewish governors, mayors, congressmen, senators, writers, bankers, et al. That was precisely what the Poles were determined to avoid by way of legislation. House was shocked to hear President Dmowski's demands and complaints, particulary since he had worked so hard to give birth to the new Polish government. In January, 1919 House formally declared, against Polish wishes, that the 3 million Jews of Poland must be officially and strongly protected: "Before giving the Poles their independence they must undertake very seriously to guarantee a just and equal treatment of religious and racial minorities."

Despite House's pressure to Poles would go ahead and enact whatever laws they thought necessary to protect themselves. The Jews of Poland would remain outside the law until 1939. The Polish government was so desperate to get rid of its Jewish population that it proposed, long before anyone else, that Madagascar should be the recipient of Polish Jews. Many Jews left Poland and settled in France. However, the bulk of Polish Jews remained in Poland as a hostile group against the government.

Poland's problems were compounded by the 7 million Ukrainians and Germans who had been annexed against their will. Lloyd George had warned Clemenceau: "Because of Danzig we will have a new war."

CHAPTER LXVII

Chapter 67

Danzig, the Corridor and Silesia

Despite Lloyd George's objections Prussia would be cut in half by a corridor said to be Polish; the regions and the city of Danzig would be separated from Germany; and eastern Upper Silesia, one of Germany's richest regions (producing 20% of its coal, 57% of its lead, 72% of its zinc) would be given to Poland. The Allies had also ordered Germany to hand over Posen, another rich German province and the birthplace of Marshal von Hindenburg, to Poland. Léon Noel, who was no Germanophile, stressed that Danzig was German: "Everybody knew and no one challenged that this great city was in fact totally German." (German Aggression Against Poland, p. 44) Churchill himself wrote: "German science and capital had created a vigorous industry in this territory. German culture, imposed by the power of an energetic empire, had left its mark everywhere." For many centuries there had been only a handful of Poles in Danzig. Yet the Allies gave Poland control of the city's customs, taxes, port facilities and even the city's diplomatic representation. This meant that any German Danziger traveling abroad had to deal with Polish embassies and consulates. He was at the mercy of hateful and arrogant alien bureaucrats whenever he required a passport or visa. Churchill revealed later that Danzigers had barely escaped total absorption: "The commission first proposed to place Danzig entirely under Polish sovereignty, which would subject Danzigers to Polish laws and mandatory conscription in the Polish army." (World Crisis, vol. IV, p. 240) "It is evident," said Noel, "that Germany could never accept such a solution." Noel was correct in all his observations concerning Danzig. When the Danzigers finally had the chance to vote, on the eve of the Second World War, they would choose Germany by a margin of 99%. Wilson had guaranteed Poland "free and secure access to the sea," not "access to the sea," as hundreds of biased historians and journalists have written. This deliberate misinterpretation of diplomatic texts initiated the creation of the corridor. A stretch of land 20 to 70 miles wide was

cut across Germany. It was just as if Germany (after winning the war, theoretically speaking) had cut a 50-mile-wide territory across Brugundy, Lyon and Provence in the direction of Marseilles in order to secure for itself "a free and sure access to the Mediterranean Sea." Such a thing would have been unthinkable for France, but it was imposed on Germany. For 20 years Germans would have to cross from one Germany to another locked in sealed trains, subjected to the humiliating control of two separate Polish borders and customs, both entering and leaving the corridor. Ambassador Noel recognized the danger such a situation could bring about:

The existence of this corridor cutting off East Prussia from the rest of Germany forced [the Germans] to cross two borders when they wanted to go from Berlin to Konigsberg. It seemed unjustifiable and dangerous. How could we not predict that the Reich would exploit this paradoxical situation as long as it would last? (German Aggression Against Poland, p. 45)

Noel added: "The 'free city' of Danzig and the 'corridor' were created and the Treaty of Versailles would be affected by this most glaring of all its weaknesses."

The confiscation of Danzig and the corridor from Germany was, however, not enough to satisfy the expansionist Polish politicians. Egged on by Clemenceau and Tardieu they now demanded chunks of East Prussia and wanted to declare what was left of it a republic similar to Bavaria. The claims were so preposterous that even the British balked, cautioning Tardieu and the Poles of the inherent dangers such a conquest would have. The British managed to put the issue to a vote in the regions earmarked for immediate Polish annexation, much to the fury of the Poles and their champion Tardieu. The plebiscite would be held in the Allenstein and Marienwerder districts. Despite massive propaganda and intimidation, despite the promise that those Prussians who would vote for Poland would be exempted from the huge reparation bill the Allies were about to slap on Germany, the Prussian voters cast their ballot almost unanimously in favor of remaining German:

Allenstein district: for Germany, 360,000; against, 8,000. Marienwerder district: for Germany, 896,000; against, 8,000.

This represented a total of 98.73% in favor of Germany and 1.27% in favor of Poland. These were amazing figures that are seldom seen in Allied history books. Tardieu call the plebiscite an "inadmissible concession to Germany." It had been a stinging defeat, which the Allies and particularly Tardieu would take care not to duplicate when they would press for their next annexation: Upper Silesia.

Clemenceau had decided that the loss of Silesia, a rich and highly industrialized province, would permanently reduce the power of Germany. polish politicians did not hide their greed for this free gift from Clemenceau. In fact they had not waited for formalities and had sent in armed bands as early as February, 1919 to establish their claim. Germany, disarmed by the November, 1918 armistice, had to cope with the Bolshevik onslaught, yet it managed to send a few units

to repel the invaders at Frankfurt on the Oder and at Breslau. On February 16, 1919 Clemenceau intervened militarily and forced the German units to pull back behind a specific demarcation line. French historian Benoist-Méchin wrote:

This line would serve as a provisional border between Poland and Germany pending a decision from the Allied Supreme Council. This arrangement clearly favored Warsaw. All that was required for Poland to annex Silesia was a simple declaration transforming the provisional demarcatior line into a permanent border. This is what the ministers at the peace conference would strive for. L'Armée Allemande, vol. II, p. 165)

On May 7, 1919 Clemenceau presented the German delegation with a projected treaty calling for the transfer of Silesia to Poland (Section VIII, Articles 87 and 88). Thus, because a band of irregulars without the slightest Allied mandate had invaded southeast Germany [Silesia], Germany was to lose 2 million people, nearly all ethnic Germans, and its richest province to the invaders. Clemenceau had legalized the aggression by preventing the Germans from defending themselves and forcing them back behind the Oder River. Wilson, whom one might have expected to react vehemently to such an outrageous and total contradiction of his Fourteen Points, not only remained silent on the subject but supported Clemenceau. Churchill explained Wilson's betrayal of his own principles: "Polish voters constituted a real factor in American politics. Regardless of any other consideration, Wilson had decided that Upper Silesia would be given to Poland and that all opposition on this point would be regarded by him as a personal offense." (World Crisis, vol. IV, p. 213) German indignation ran high but their protest fell on deaf ears. Clemenceau and Wilson were firmly on the Polish side. The British Establishment had become most concerned at seeing France and the United States draw together. It was totally against its centuries-old policy of keeping potentially strong states in a weak position. Lloyd George saw the Silesia operation as a boost to French power and on these grounds was quick to declare himself against the annexation. Officially, of course, his reasons for opposing the French and the Americans were based purely on altruism, morality and a British sense of "fair play." He would intone a magnificent speech at the Supreme Council:

I do not know who seeks here to impose his hegemony but for my part I will not tolerate that we should take away from Germany more Germans than is strictly necessary. The Polish proposition, tending to subject 2,100,000 Germans to the rule of a people with a different religion, a people whose history has never provided proof that it is able to govern itself, this proposition runs the risk of triggering a new European war sooner or later. (Benoist-Méchin, vol. II, p. 167)

London used all its power to pressure Wilson to change his mind. Torn between the pressure of political necessities at home and multi-level British pressure, Wilson distanced himself from Clemenceau by raising doubts on French motivation: "France is interested in giving Poland territories which did not belong to her." (Bullitt, President Wilson, p. 388) Hypocritically he fell back on the

position of giving equal consideration to the aggressor and the victim: "Since Germany and Poland both claim these people [the Silesian Germans], wouldn't it be wise to let them decide for themselves?" Although Wilson appeared to go back to his Fourteen Points, he was still recognizing Poland's claim in a situation where they had none in the first place. Silesia was German and the word "claim" was so much legal doubletalk to obscure that fact. The British Establishment also maneuvered the Italians against the French. Now Clemenceau found himself alone with his Polish allies. He fought tooth and nail to have his way but finally had to back down when the British threatened not to sign the treaty. For Clemenceau the threat was awesome. Without the treaty all his plans for revenge and reparations would come to naught. For the British it did not really matter since they had already helped themselves to the German colonial empire, German assets and the German navy. Clemenceau was enraged but realized they had the whip hand. He was forced to compromise. The new formula would no longer recognize the de facto annexation of Silesia by Poland but would prescribe a plebiscite:

A plebiscite will be instituted in Upper Silesia whereby the inhabitants will be called to indicate at the ballot box whether they want to be reunited with Germany or Poland. Germany must now declare it renounces, in favor of Poland, all claims to Upper Silesia beyond the border line fixed as a consequence of this plebiscite. (Article 88 of the Treaty.)

Clemenceau, however, was fighting back and somehow managed to dilute the resolution with some additions of his own:

1) Within 15 days of the present treaty's implemenation, all German authorities and troops will evacuate the zone subject to the plebiscite. All military and para-military groups formed in that zone by the local population will be immediately dissolved. Military personnel who are non-resident will be evacuated. 2) The plebiscite zone will immediately be placed under the authority of an inter-Allied commission of four members designated by the United States, France, the British Empire and Italy. The zone will be occupied by the troops of the Allied powers and their associates.

Clemenceau also succeeded in adding a few words at the end of his paragraph, which would ensure, in case the plebiscite went wrong, many different interpretations and even partial annexations: "The result of the plebiscite will be determined by the communes." Thus the voters could not get German campaign material and information except with the greatest difficulty. The presence of foreign troops and the authority they exercised would, in the context of the time, intimidate and frighten many voters; at least that was Clemenceau's intent. Under such pressure it was possible that some communes could cast their votes in favor of Polish annexation. Silesia would then become a patchwork of conflicting allegiances. Polish politicians had been appeased: the plebiscite was not necessarily lost; it could even be turned to their advantage now that the German authorities had been thrown out. Wrote Benoist-Méchin:

The Poles realized the plebiscite would take place under conditions favorable to

them. The German authorities and troops were obliged to leave the plebiscite zone, which would be administered by an inter-Allied commission presided over by a French general and disposing of a strong contingent of French troops. Since France was far too closely linked to Poland's position, the Poles reasoned, the French would regard a German victory as a personal defeat and consquently would do the impossible to ensure the triumph of the Polish cause. (L'Armée Allemande, vol. II, p. 169)

The treaty stipulated, at Clemenceau's insistence, that the Silesian resolution be implemented "within 15 days." Yet it would take six months before the troops of the inter-Allied commission showed up, their official function being to ensure the correct and orderly implementation of the plebiscite. It was during this strange delay that hordes of Polish agents would roam the Silesian countryside sowing sabotage and terror. The Germans, who had been disarmed, were suddenly at the mercy of armed gangs operating with total immunity. On July 10, 1919 they blew up the three main bridges over the Oder River; they occupied the railway stations, and convoys of trucks full of arms and ammunition could be seen everywhere. It appeared that the Polish politicians in Warsaw were not about to take any chances and had decided to take control of Silesia before the plebiscite. The convenient absence of German or Allied troops gave them a free hand to shape Silesia as they saw fit.

Chapter 68

The Oder Plebiscite

News of the Polish invasion and violation of the plebiscite terms provoked an unforeseen reaction in Germany. Thousands of veterans and young patriots improvised military units and rushed to the rescue of their beleaguered Silesian compatriots. They managed to put the invaders to flight. Paris and Warsaw were stunned by this "German audacity." The Polish politicians decided to bide their time until February 11, 1920, when the Allied troops would finally reach Silesia. Theoretically the troops were under the authority of an international commission, but in reality it was more in the nature of a French expedition. Wilson had declined to send a single American soldier because he could not afford to lose the Polish vote at home. The British sent four battalions with instructions to avoid confrontations, and the Italians sent a token force of 2,000 men. Clemenceau, however, sent 11,000 soldiers. Furthermore the Allied forces would be under the command of French General Le Bon, who would be to Silesia what Mangin had been to the Rhineland, except that in this case Le Bon would have Clemenceau's full backing.

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Le Bon had been instructed to close his eyes to Polish infractions and provocations. The treaty stipulated that the plebiscite take place within weeks of June, 1919, when it had been enacted. Yet months and months dragged on without the slightest action. The Italians were thoroughly bored; they understood neither French nor German and even less about the issues involved; they kept wondering what on earth they were doing under grey skies 800 miles from sunny Italy. Polish agitators had a free run of the zone. They were paid by Warsaw politicians with French taxpayers' money.

After 23 months of deliberate delay the plebiscite was finally held on March 21, 1921. While the Germans had not been allowed to campaign for their cause, the Poles had been given every assistance to woo or intimidate (as the case might

be) the local voters. The Silesians were promised escape from the hardship of war reparations if they opted to join Poland. Despite all threats and entreaties the Silesians voted by a margin of 60% to remain German. The people had spoken but the governments of Paris and Warsaw were not about to give up. Thanks to Clemenceau's addendum to the treaty, "The results of the vote will be determined by the communes." Le Bon ordered that Polish workers who worked in German factories be given the industrial zone of Silesia. These were guest-workers who had been given the vote to offset German numbers. It was unlikely that Le Bon would have acted without precise instructions from Clemenceau in this flagrant bid to negate the vote of the majority of Silesians as well as ignoring the terms of the treaty. Yet Le Bon went on to plan the "sharing of Silesia" just as if there had not been any referendum. For their part the Poles ominously threatened to back the partition plan with force of arms if necessary. On May 1, 1920 the inter-Allied commission declared that partition, "according to the voting results," was imminent. For the third time armed Polish units invaded Silesia to enforce Warsaw's claim to the German province regardless of voting results. While the commission was waffling with words, Le Bon allowed the invading Poles to do as they pleased: "It was repugnant for him [Le Bon] to take coercive measures against the Polish allies of France, for whom most of his officers felt a marked sympathy," said Benoist-Méchin. Clemenceau would go even further: he would intervene on the side of the Polish invaders. On May 9, 1920 he instructed his ambassador in Berlin to present an amazing note to the German government: "Any dispatch of German troops to Upper Silesia will be considered a violation of the Treaty of Versailles and France will respond to it by occupying the Ruhr." (Benoist-Méchin, L'Armée Allemande, vol. II, p. 185) Clemenceau's ultimatum shocked Germany: if action were not taken to protect a German province which had just voted to remain German in an Allied-supervised plebiscite, then Germany would see the last of its industrial regions fall into the hands of the French army!

The Polish government, strengthened by Clemenceau's intervention, organized a full-scale invasion of Silesia. There was an abundance of arms in Warsaw, accumulated by General Weygand during the Vistula campaign. The Polish troops had at their disposal large quantities of heavy artillery, hand grenades, flame throwers, mines, cannons and an unlimited number of rifles.

The invasion turned to terror: "Germans were tortured, mutilated and killed. Villages and castles were looted and set afire." (*Eastern Frontier of Germany*, p. 79) These lines were printed not in Germany but in England. The leader of this wave of terror was a former miner turned journalist called Adalbert Korfanty. Officially the Polish government claimed to have no control over the "spontaneous explosion of popular will" in Silesia, but the London Times filed a report from on-the-spot correspondents, dated May 10, 1921, which contradicted the Polish claim:

The headquarters for the organization of supplies and assistance from Poland is maintained at Sosnowice. There is a fact which is difficult to ignore: the border between Poland and Upper Silesia is as open as the London Bridge.

Korfanty, who had initially been named "plebiscite commissar," had become on the eve of the invasion "insurgent leader." With full logistic back-up, Polish troops poured into Silesia and took most of the undefended large industrial centers. They then proceeded to occupy both sides of the Oder River. The German government vainly appealed to "all the powers of civilization, of reason and universal conscience" to defend its invaded territory. The conscience of politicians and governments is highly selective and proved to be so on this occasion: the international force headed by Le Bon and the inter-Allied commission had heard and seen no evil, like the proverbial monkeys. Lord Robert Cecil remarked: "Since the start of the insurrection the inter-Allied commission has lost all control over Upper Silesia." (The Question of Upper Silesia, p. 6) Amazingly only the Italians would live up to their obligations and with great courage would fight those who violated the treaty and the plebiscite they had been entrusted to protect. They alone would honor the mandate their British and French colleagues were ignoring. Wrote Benoist-Méchin:

The inter-Allied commission began to declare a state of siege in the major cities of Silesia, proclaiming it would stop at nothing to restore order. But that is as far as it went. While the Italians were trying to stop the insurgents by force of arms at the cost of 40 dead and some 200 wounded, the French troops, which represented the bulk of the occupation forces, did not lift a rifle. Instead they let through columns of trucks and artillery units. (*L'Armée Allemande*, Benoist-Méchin, vol. II, p. 180)

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The German High Command, faced with an imminent Ruhr invasion from France, did not react to the Silesian outrage. Once more help came from volunteers across Germany. Without government support they came by the thousands with whatever weapons they could lay their hands on and once more managed to reconquer two-thirds of Silesia.

In the words of Ernst von Salomon, Germans had answered the call of patriotism:

> We did not care about figures, statistics, notes, ultimatums, hereditary claims and election results. Their [the Silesians'] appeal had hit us in the heart; it had overcome all hesitation and reflection. This land was German; it was threatened and we went there ready to shed our blood to save it.

Le Bon, a fat little bureaucrat, was no match for the selfless and motivated German volunteers. They pushed back the invaders on three fronts. Their most heroic feat would be the recapture of the Annaberg: Bavarian volunteers fought 15 hours in hand-to-hand combat after hoisting cannons 4,000 feet high on rugged mountain terrain. The exploit was reported by an unknown soldier in a brochure called Oberland in Oberschlesien: "The bravest of men felt anguish

and joy when they saw the black, white and red flag appear at the summit. It was the first victory since the ignominious days of November, 1918. The Polish formations had been dislodged." The volunteers recaptured 28 German villages.

The Allies, who had closed their eyes on Polish atrocities, were now outraged that the Germans were defending themselves. They demanded that the German governmemt enact a decree disbanding the volunteer units. Ebert signed the decree, fearful and broken-hearted. The Poles had been saved from total disaster but the sacrifice of the German volunteers had not been in vain: no one would attempt to steal western Upper Silesia, which Germany was allowed to keep according to the plebiscite. The scandal of the Polish invasion had strained relations among the Allies. The Italians, who had lost soldiers fighting alone, were infuriated at the British, who had done nothing, and at the French, who had sided with the Poles. Even an English delegate to the inter-Allied commission declared at Kreuzburg on May 13, 1921:

> Like most of the English officers in Upper Silesia I feel ashamed and humiliated because I am well aware that the inter-Allied commission has failed in its obligation to ensure respect for the law and maintain order in this province.

Lloyd George, who was responsible for this failure, went on record to deplore the Silesian tragedy with a copious amount of crocodile tears in what was really an attack against his French rivals:

> Either the Allied forces restore order or the German troops must be authorized to do it. To prevent German participation in restoring order is not fair. Fair play has always been the principle which has inspired Great Britain and I propose that we adhere to it until the end. Whatever the outcome we will not bow to a fait accompli. (House of Commons speech made on May 13, 1921)

The Silesian tragedy had at least served a worthwhile purpose: it had brought to the world proof of the venality and hypocrisy of the Paris Peace Conference and the Versailles Treaty. Behind the pompous oratory were the base intrigues of greedy and mediocre men. Behind the lofty principles of the Fourteen Points were men involved in sordid little electoral manipulations and conscienceless political deals, the stuff of democracies in every latitude. When Europe was crying out for magnanimity, generosity and vision, the petty gnomes of Versailles answered with stupidity, hatred and hypocrisy. It was therefore fitting that the Allies would dump the fiasco they had created in Silesia into the lap of the League of Nations. The League members had no wish to spend their time on such an unglamorous issue, so the Silesian case was passed on to a sub-commission composed of one Spaniard, one Brazilian, one Chinese and one Belgian. None of these men was very knowledgeable in Silesian affairs but somehow they came up with a compromise which pleased neither Germans nor

Poles: Germany would retain two-thirds of Upper Silesia while the Poles would be given one-third.

After Silesia, the Allies decided thay had had enough with plebiscites. Despite intrigues and manipulations they almost invariably went against them. The Silesian mess had furthermore brought universal discredit to the process. The last plebiscite on the agenda was in Schlewig-Holstein, on the German-Danish border. There the referendum took place without incident because the Allies kept well away. Even the Polish politicians had become sufficiently wary of unpredictable plebiscites to let the Czechs have three-quarters of disputed territories as well as part of the city of Teschen, which was thereby cut in half. Only in September, 1938 would Poland regain the other half, taking advantage of the confusion caused by post-Munich developments.

Thus a new Poland had been created. More than 10 million foreigners had been included for reasons of greed, vengeance and stupidity. The Galicians, Ukrainians, Russians, Lithuanians, Czechs and Germans would never be assimilated; they had been forced into a nation they hated, against their will. In September, 1939 they showed what they thought of their Polish status: they rejoiced at Poland's collapse.

Next on the Allied agenda was the forced herding of millions of Sudeten Germans, Slovaks, Ruthenians and Hungarians into another Allied concoction: Czechoslovakia.

Chapter 69

Czech Rapacity

There had never been a country called Czechoslovakia. Europe had known for a thousand years a land called Bohemia, which was steeped in German culture and which had been a province of the Holy Roman Empire. Its Gothic art rivaled the Rhineland cathedrals. The Habsburgs were kings of Bohemia and in 1914 Bohemia (along with its neighbors Sudetenland, Slovakia and Ruthenia) was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Those who then dreamed of an independent Bohemia or Slovakia could be counted on one hand. One of them was a lackluster professor who appeared most respectful of the imperial order. His name was Thomas Masaryk. But he was more than just a professor at the University of Vienna. Well before the Sarajevo assassination he was the head of a secret pan-Slavic organization controlled from St. Petersburg. He was, in secret, what Pashich was in Serbia. He had been warned in time that war was approaching and left for the safety of Paris. Masaryk lived in France for three years on money paid by the Russian Embassy in Paris, while his counterpart Edward Benes was supported by the British. After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 the United States would pick up the cost of maintaining the two pan-Slavic agents. Masaryk was also a high-ranking Freemason and was involved with the Grand Orient Lodge, which had controlled France since its Revolution of 1789. Likewise Benes was very much involved in the secrets of British Masonry. As a pan-Slav agent working for Russian expansionists Masaryk was thinking in 1914 of establishing several Russianized grand duchies, which would supplant the Austrian and German regimes in central Europe. He would present this plan to the capitals of western Europe. On April 15, 1915 he made it public in the form of a memorandum to the British Foreign Office: "Bohemia and Moravia will form a kingdom placed under the sovereignty of a Russian grand duke." The tsar apparently agreed with the plan since he had already made known to the Poles his intention of establishing their national unity, as President Poincaré pointed out in his book Invasion.

Masaryk did not realize that his admiring disciple and fellow grand master,

Benes, was plotting against him in the best Masonic tradition: secretly. During the summer of 1918 Benes engineered Masaryk's being named president of a yet-to-be-created Czechoslovakian republic. The move was supposed to honor a great man, but was really meant to neutralize Masaryk. From that time on Benes pulled the strings, hiding behind Masaryk's ceremonial title. The Paris Grand Orient, which had total control of the French government, backed Benes as the best of the two Masons to implement its policy. Masaryk was directed to cultivate a close relationship with President Wilson. He used his excellent memory to learn entire chapters of some mediocre books Wilson had written. He then recited them to an amazed Wilson, claiming he had never read anything so profound in all his life. No one had yet appreciated his genius to such an extent, and Wilson reciprocated by regarding Masaryk as a genius. Wilson became all ears to the shameless flatteries of Masaryk and it was not long before he was in favor of the creation of a Czechoslovakian republic. Masaryk easily convinced Wilson that it was his duty to bring freedom to the Czechs and the Slovaks because America was the torchbearer of liberty. He also waxed heavily rhetorical on the Calvinistic values that united the Czechs and the Americans. Wilson loved all he heard and decided to back Masaryk's noble crusade for freedom, even though he confused the Slovakians with the Slovenians. Benes and Masaryk kept talking about the Slovaks and it became accepted they were one and the same people as the Czechs. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Slovakia was a proud and distinct country having nothing in common with the likes of Masaryk and Benes. At no time did the Slovaks deputize the Czechs Masaryk or Benes to represent them in any capacity. Masaryk's call to Wilson to "liberate" the Slovaks was nothing but the first step in colonizing 31/2 million Slovaks against their will. In order to deceive the gullible Wilson still more, Masaryk organized on May 27, 1915 a "treaty of cohabitation" between Czechs and Slovaks. The "treaty" was signed in Cleveland by a few men of Slovak origin who were now naturalized Americans. It was meant to impress Wilson with the Slovaks' aspirations to join themselves to the Czechs' freedom movement. Masaryk himself related how this particular operation was set up:

> The "treaty" was really a private agreement among a few emigrants. In fact all were emigrants, except two, who had been naturalized for some time. This was only a piece of paper without value or much practical importance. It was even signed on a holiday, which, according to American law, made it null and void. (Masaryk, *The Making of a State*)

Yet this bit of "null and void" paper would trigger the absorption of 3.1 million Slovaks into a regime they never wanted to be part of. Benes organized phony committees of Czechs and Slovaks along the Cleveland lines in London, Amsterdam, Geneva and Paris. These committees would in June, 1918 name Masaryk as president of the "Republic of Czechoslovakia," which of course did not exist geographically or legally at that time. All these activities were based on the

Cleveland "treaty." By July 30, 1918 Masaryk was again using the Cleveland "treaty":

> On July 19th (1918), I countersigned the Cleveland agreement of May 27, 1915 between the delegates of Slovak and Czech emigrant societies of America. The accord had been set up in order to satisfy the aspirations of a small group of Slovaks who dreamed of God knows what childishness: an autonomous Slovakia with its own administration, its own parliament, its own courts, its own schools. Without hesitation I approved in the name of the Czech nation the engagements taken in the name of the Slovaks. (Masaryk, *The Making of a State*)

Thus Masaryk had approved without hesitation the arrangements he himself called "childish." Thus a few misguided Slovak dreamers had been duped into signing a worthless piece of paper, thinking they were striking a blow for their freedom. An ignorant and naive Wilson had endorsed the farcical treaty officially recognizing the state of Czechoslovakia, concocted in Cleveland and Pittsburgh.

The men who had assumed the right to shape the destiny of the Czechs and the Slovaks had left their homelands a long time ago and had lost touch with the realities facing their former compatriots. With an exception or two they were no longer Czechs or Slovaks but naturalized emigrants. Their bizarre scheme had been sold to Wilson and the Allies with deceit and without any provisions for the people they claimed to represent to express their opinion. No one would ask any of the 3.5 million Slovaks of Slovakia what they thought, or even less, whether they wanted to be subjugated to a nebulous entity called Czechoslovakia. Without consultation they would be thrown in the Czech bag like so many pounds of potatoes. Wilson had been so enchanted with the wily Masaryk that he had totally forgotten the self- determination clauses of his Fourteen Points.

Not only were the Slovaks not asked their opinions, but they were systematically prevented from saying a single word on their own behalf. The Masonic government of France hated them with a passion because they were traditional Catholics. The French politicians of Masonic discipline had a vigorous anti-Catholic policy at home and abroad, and the Austro- Hungarian empire was high on their list for destruction. In this endeavor they had the full backing of the British Establishment. When the Slovaks attempted to let their views be known in Paris the French police ruthlessly suppressed them. The shocking treatment meted out to these unfortunate people was recorded by the American delegate to the peace conference, Colonel Bonsai, in his book Suitors and Suppliants. The hero, or rather the victim, was the Slovak nationalist leader Monsignor Hlinka. It was traditional for a priest to lead this deeply Catholic country. The last Slovak leader would be Monsignor Tiso, who was summarily hanged by the Czech Communists in 1945, while he prayed and clasped his rosary. Monsignor Hlinka realized at the end of 1918 that his people were being

railroaded into servitude. He decided to enlighten the Paris conference as to the real aspirations of his fellow Slovaks. First he was refused an exit visa by the Czech police under orders from Benes. He left clandestinely for Warsaw, where the French Embassy did everything to stop him from reaching Paris. Finally the papal nuncio in Poland, the future Pope Pius XI, helped Hlinka and his companions escape the hostile environment created by the powerful French Embassy. They had to make their way like fugitives through Croatia, Italy, and Switzerland in appalling conditions before entering France, again clandestinely. They had had no shelter, food or sleep for days. In Paris they found refuge in a monastery so that Hlinka was at last able to notify the American delegation of his presence. Colonel Bonsal went to meet with Hlinka: "I keep," wrote Bonsal, "excellent memories of my relations with this Slovakian priest. I often think he was the most sympathetic man among the numerous delegates I had to deal with. He had the dark and luminous eyes of great beauty, which in truth were the windows of his soul and an obvious sincerity." Father Hlinka received Bonsai in his little cell. He produced a letter from General Stefanik, who had fought in the French army before being assassinated by Benes' agents as he was returning to Slovakia. He had entrusted Father Hlinka with a letter to the American delegation: "I hope to join Father Hlinka and his friends soon. Please try to facilitate an interview with the president or Colonel House. I can guarantee the absolute veracity of what they will have to say." It had taken almost three months for Father Hlinka and his friends to reach Paris and Bonsai intimated they had arrived almost too late. "I feared that," answered the priest, "but our delay is only due to the extraordinary measures taken by the Czechs to stop us from reaching Paris." Father Hlinka explained the Slovaks were fearful of the Communists.

The Czechs had told them that only unity between Czechs and Slovaks would provide salvation from the Communists: "Why not try to join forces? In any case it would only be a temporary measure, like a trial marriage. If the union proved inadequate we both would go our own way." But within three weeks the mask dropped. "We suffered more in this short period of time at the hands of the Czechs than in a thousand years of our history. Remember my words. Time will show they are true." Bonsai reminded Father Hlinka that the "Pittsburgh declaration" had guaranteed Slovak autonomy, to which he replied that the same declaration had also guaranteed Slovak representation at the Peace Conference. "We have endured everything," continued the priest, "from the Czech soldiery and the Prague politicians. The Czechs consider Slovakia as a colony and treat us as if we were savages from Africa. To the foreigners they claim we belong to the same race but as soon as they get the chance they treat us like serfs.

Bonsal reported what he learned to Wilson, who was amazed to hear that there was a difference of opinion between Czechs and Slovaks. Realizing he had been duped, he angrily interrupted Benes's annexationist speech at the conference on May 5, 1919: "Under no circumstances, I declare this formally, have I ever stated that I deemed a popular consultation in Slovakia as superfluous." (Conference Transcript Folio IX, series XXI, dossier G/L) Benes knew what to expect if

a referendum were ever to be held in Slovakia and proceeded to remove the originator of such dangerous ideas. He asked Tardieu to take immediate action. Tardieu was glad to oblige his co-conspirator. The next night the French police broke into the monastery and dragged out Father Hlinka and his associates. They were spirited out of France the same night. When Bonsai returned to consult with the Slovakian delegation all he found were empty cells. The abbot of the monastery tearfully explained to Bonsal: "Benes and Tardieu, Tardieu and Benes, they are the guilty ones." The American delegation officially protested to Tardieu, who replied that the Slovaks were "strange Russians of the Carpathians who were difficult to understand as well as to assimilate. It would be absurd to convert this Part of Europe into a whirlwind of governments, a headache of little nations." The American delegation was stupefied at such insolence and Tardieu was warned that he was not taking the "right path for the establishment of a solid Czechoslovakian state." After his man-handling at the hands of the French police, Father Hlinka made his way back to Slovakia, where he continued his fight in defense of his people. They wanted to elect him to the parliament the Czechs had imposed on them. "Hlinka," wrote Bonsal

> ... decided to accept his election in order to fight for the freedom of his people. A few weeks before the election, Czech police burst into Hlinka's house in the middle of the night and took him to jail far away from the peasants who honored him. For months he was treated with such cruelty that his health was permanently impaired. Poor Father Hlinka deserved better than this crown of thorns. (*Suitors and Suppliants*, p. 271)

In fact Father Hlinka had been savagely and repeatedly beaten in jail, where he was held without the slightest due process of law. Thus ended the Slovak attempt to exercise their right of self-determination. The Slovaks were not the only people to be the object of Czech greed. There were also 691,923 Hungarians and 640,000 Ruthenians who, like the Slovaks, had been immediately muzzled. Above all there were 3,231,688 Germans, living in the Sudetenland. Altogether these diverse peoples would be railroaded into servitude through the good offices of the Versailles Treaty. The Czechs represented half of the "Czechoslovakian" population according to statistics provided by Benes. According to other statistics they were well in the minority. The creation of this sausage-shaped state 700 miles long was due to the relentless schemes of European Freemasons. For a long time they had attempted to destroy the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the last Catholic bastion in Europe. The Masons had, a little more than a century before, unleashed a bloody revolution in France, which had given them control of that country ever since. They were now ready to take control of Austria-Hungary. The Sudeten Germans were a very dynamic element of the Catholic empire, and it was very important for the Masons to separate them forever from Austria. The public is often misled by the innocuous aspects of Masonry, whether sartorial or ceremonial. That middle-aged men like to feel important by reciting secret oaths and bedecking their chests with triangles,

compasses, squares or mini-aprons is not very disturbing; it is just their way of playing at voodoo or overcoming their lack of individuality in a kind of group therapy. However, in 1914 the rituals of Freemasonry meant something more. It was consumed by an insatiable greed for power. From 1914 to 1918 Freemasons occupied most positions of power in the various European states, including the armed forces. In France from General Sarrail to Poincaré and Tardieu, almost all the ministers were fanatical Masons. Masons were equally prominent in Great Britain and the United States at all levels of governmemt, business and the media. Against this formidable array of power Catholic Austria stood alone. The first Austrians would soon fall under the blows of concerted Masonic attack. With the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian empire in November, 1918 the Sudeten Germans made known their intention to declare their independence and create their own state, which they did almost immediately. How these decisions were of any concern to the Czechs is hard to fathom; the Sudeten Germans were of a different ethnicity, different language, customs and religion. They had been separated from Austria but no one had mandated the Czechs to replace Austria. Nevertheless Czech soldiers poured into the Sudetenland to overthrow the Sudeten government. Sudeten ministers were thrown in jail and beaten up, just like the Slovakian patriots, and many villagers were shot to death.

Again the protests of the persecuted Sudeten Germans were silenced by the Masonic conspiracy of Benes, Tardieu, Poincaré and their allies. Now there was nothing to stop Benes from spreading Masonic rule over more Catholic populations, including 3.5 million Slovaks, 1.5 million Hungarians and 75,000 Poles. Benes had a plan for a greater Czechoslovakia to stretch from the Danube to the River Spree, that is, from the outer Berlin suburbs to the center of Budapest. The plan had been drafted in 1916 in the secrecy of Grand Orient Masonic lodges. Flushed with the success of his aggression, Benes was now unveiling it for all to see. Under the heading "Destroy Austria-Hungary," a detailed map had been drawn by a cartographer called Kuuffner at Benes's direction: the new Czechoslovakia would swallow the Austrian Empire and more. The borders stretched from Budapest to Dresden and southeast Berlin; Silesia was also to be annexed. The plan and map was later published by the Delagrave Publishing Company in Paris. Caught between Communism and Freemasonry the people of Central Europe did not have a chance. The Grand Orient shared the same anti-clericalism as the Communists; they had always worked together against Christians and regarded the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian empire as a mutual achievement. The power of international Masonry was such that Wilson did not dare go beyond mild verbal protestations at the flagrant enslavement of 10 million people by the Czech Masonic establishment. There was never any question of invoking his Fourteen Points on their behalf. For appearance's sake Benes had promised in 1919 that the peoples who had been delivered to his rule would enjoy a large degree of autonomy. This was pure hypocrisy from a tyrant wearing the mask of a liberal statesman. In the 20 years that followed, the Prague Masons stripped their conquered populations of all freedom, dignity and national character. The Czech language was imposed everywhere; the

schools, the courts, all the army were Czech and controlled by Czech Masons. Those who resisted were tortured, jailed or killed. For 20 years these peoples would be forced to endure their Masonic masters' oppression. Deliverance would come in 1938 and the Masonic bane over central Europe would be broken. The Masonic defeat in 1938 and 1939 would precipitate World War II International Masonry declared war on the country which had freed the oppressed. Secretary of State Lansing had correctly predicted: "The [Versailles] peace treaties will be the source of a new war; it is as sure as the return of day after night." The Second World War would therefore not be a sudden and spontaneous event but a direct and inevitable consequence of the ill- inspired treaties of Versailles. The war had been declared at Versailles itself on June 28, 1919.

It can be argued tha the Communists behaved much worse in 1945 than the Allies in 1918. But the results in terms of suffering were not very different. Furthermore, the 1919 peacemakers, unlike Stalin, had cloaked themselves with liberal and humanitarian respectability. Communist barbarism was unspeakable, but it corresponded to a predictable pattern established in 1917. The Communists had killed and killed; they had promised nothing except more terror. The Allies, on the other hand, were all respectable, civilized men, all champions of liberalism and democracy, who had consistently betrayed all the principles they so loudly proclaimed. They had gone back on their word, betrayed their friends, not once but ten times. They had committed a crime against the spirit. They had brought venality, treason, greed, stupidity and hypocrisy to new heights. They had fatally undermined the foundations of Western Civilization. In Prague, however, we were only halfway to Golgotha: 10 more countries awaited crucifixion.

Chapter 70

The Dismemberment of Austria-Hungary

The subjugation of over 3 million Sudeten Germans was the first move in subjugation of Austria. After the armistice of 1918, enormous mutilations would completely dismember the vast empire which had contributed so much to Western Civilization. Over the centuries it had brought to most of Europe a political order without excessive rigor, a measured style of life, an amiability with gentle humor, and a remarkable culture. The arts and music flourished, and the tranquility of the Austrian order had created genuine peace and harmony throughout the empire. The Masonic guillotine would decapitate Austria. Its limbs and body would be thrown to its ravenous neighbors. From almost a half million square miles, Austria would be reduced to 60,000 square miles. Only its head remained; the empire had shrunk to Vienna, surrounded by a little bit of land. From 50 million citizens it was now 6 million. With its loss of territory and people Austria was deprived of 90% of its coal, 60% of its iron ore, 80% of its hops, 75% of its fruit, 50% of its textile fibers, 39% of its wheat, 32% of its potatoes, 26% of its cattle and 87% of its corn.

While northern Austria was being parceled out to Benes, the Allies delivered its southern part to Italy. After victory was achieved, the Allies tried to renege on the promises they had made to lure Italy into the war, but the Italians managed to acquire South Tyrol and its 250,000 German inhabitants. There was not the slightest reason for Italy to claim this German land and its people except in the words of the Rome government:, "Our strategic border lies at the Brenner. In order to secure it these 250,000 Germans, whether they like it or not, will have to come under our power." Once more Wilson's self-determination clause, which the Allies and the Italians agreed to respect at the armistice, was not worth the paper it was written on.

If the British and the French politicians were well aware that 250,000 Germans would be traded off to Italy, Wilson remained blissfully ignorant that there were

Germans in the South Tyrol. His biographer, Ambassador Bullitt, wrote: "He gave southern Tyrol to Italy because he did not know there were Austrians of German blood south of the Brenner." (*President Wilson*, p. 242). On this matter his Allies took great care not to enlighten him.

The destruction of the Austro-Hungarian empire came at a time when its emperor, Charles, had already started the process of granting autonomy to the various nationalities which comprised it. Archduke Ferdinand, who had been assassinated at Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, was preparing to give the Serbs an autonomy similar to that of Hungary. Charles had negotiated with the Czech politician Tuscar, who happened to be a socialist, the creation of a Bohemian nation in exchange for Czech loyalty. Other nationalities were already enjoying their own culture and customs. The empire was a loose federation of very diverse peoples united by a common Western heritage and civilization. The emperor ruled with benevolence and enlightenment, without the violence and massacres employed by the Soviet, British or French empires. The Austrian empire's major fault in the eyes of world Freemasonry was its Catholicism. It was a Masonic article of faith that Catholic power had to be destroyed where ever it existed, particularly in the hands of Catholic kings or emperors: Catholic Europe had to be replaced by Masonic Europe. Lenin was keen to oblige the Freemasons in aiding in the destruction of Austria. He welcomed the creation of little countries ruled by corrupt and ruthless Masons. He would no longer be faced with the eastern bulwark Austria had represented over the centuries. Austria's fall would breach that wall and throw Europe open to conquest.

* * *

The newly created Czechoslovakia of 1919 would soon become a forward bastion of the Communists. The Czech Masons in power had immediately warmed to Lenin, and sent a delegation of Prague Jews to coordinate policy with the Soviet dictator's man in Budapest, Berl Cohen, also known as Bela Kun. When the Soviets invaded Poland in 1920 the Czechs worked with them. Lenin had ordered the training, in Russia, of several Czech units, which were to become the core of the Czech army, and the Red Army's vanguard. The British intelligence officer Major Thompson predicted: "The Soviets will recover [from their recent defeat at the hands of the Germans] sooner than we think. In the meantime it is this busy little Benes who will represent them in Slavism."

Benes, a high-ranking Mason, was the principal coordinator of Freemasonry and Communism. He remained Moscow's man until 1935, when he made a grievous mistake. The Gestapo had allowed Benes' spies to "steal" highly classified documents dealing with a "Red Army plot" to overthrow Stalin. The Soviet dictator had so much faith in Benes's reliability that he immediately ordered the execution of Marshal Tukachevsky as well as tens of thousands of officers of the Red Army.

The Masonic hatred against Austria had spread among all the Allies. Public opinion had been conditioned by largely Masonic-controlled media to wallow in

blind, irrational hatred. It was all-pervasive and had become part of the political and cultural life of France, Britain and America. Anti-Germanism, a Masonic code word for anti-Catholicism, was being whipped up at every occasion, and particularly at election time. Politicians of the left or the right were trapped into beating the anti-German drum whether they were inclined to do so or not. Churchill recognized that politicians were riding a "public opinion" tiger: "The leaders, elevated on the giddy summits of power and victory, were balancing precariously on the volatile platform of public opinion." There had been so much hatred whipped up against Germany that not even Clemenceau could satisfy his electorate's thirst for vengeance. No politician could ever be sufficiently anti-German. After years of relentless propaganda the public had been conditoned to scream for more blood and more vengeance. However, Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson would all be thrown out of office because they had satisfied "public opinion." A Belgian socialist politician called Spaak told his electorate: "I will follow you everywhere, even in your madness." Spaak was realistic politically but totally lacking in integrity and courage. It was this lack of vision which would dismember Europe.

Hungary, the most Catholic and conservative part of the age-old empire, suffered the most savage mutilation. Vienna had 40% of Austria's workers and had been successfully infiltrated by Marxist agitators. In 1918 the Socialists took power. Hungary, on the other hand, had not been infected with the Communist disease. The Hungarians were self-sufficient farmers and artisans, intensely patriotic, Christian and traditional. More Catholic than Austria, it would be more mutilated. The Versailles Treaty would grab three-quarters of its territory: 232,578 square kilometers out of 325,411. Hungary would be left with 92,833 square kilometers. More than 13 million Hungarians, 13,279,516 to be exact, were delivered like slaves to Hungary's neighbors. From a population of 20,886,437 people the Hungarians would be reduced to 7,602,871. In one year, Hungary lost two-thirds of its population. Northern Hungary was fed to the voracious Czech Masons. In the southeast, 3 million more Hungarians had fallen into Romanian hands. There Tardieu had emulated Balfour: he had promised the Transylvanian Hungarians to the Romanian government in exchange for Romania's participation in the war on the side of the Allies. The Romanian politicians always considered corruption a virtue and saw in the war a tremendous opportunity for Byzantine profiteering. From 1914 to 1918 they had had their hands out to everybody. They received money from the Russians, then from the Germans and again from Russia. They had been severely trounced by the Germans after declaring war on them. They sued for peace in exchange for giving the Germans a 99-year lease on Romanian oil fields. When Germany started to lose ground, the whole contingent of Bucharest politicians rushed to Paris, accompanied by their usual flock of prostitutes. Although their corruption and intrigues irritated Clemenceau in the extreme, 3 million Hungarians were nevertheless passed on to Romania.

Since the plebiscites had consistently turned against the Allies, the Hungarians, like the Austrians, Germans and Slovaks, would not be given the benefit of a

referendum. Count Albert Apponyi, a leading Hungarian patriot, went to Paris, despite his advanced years, to plead his people's case at the peace conference:

> Do not dispose of these people as if they were a herd of cattle. Today will be tested the sincerity of those who have so often proclaimed the great principle of international justice and liberty. We are asking a plebiscite in all the regions and we will accept its results. If our adversaries refuse to accept this test, their cause will be judged before the tribunal of human conscience. They would have resolved to subject to their yoke millions of unwilling souls.

The venerable Hungarian patriot was treated like a criminal. Benes, the Masonic hatchet man, answered Count Apponyi: "As far as the future borders of Hungary are concerned, they have been definitively set at the peace conference and there will not be the slightest modification." (*Le Temps*, December 2, 1919) With rage and hatred Benes's Masonic co-schemer Tardieu added: "There will not by any pity for Hungary." This Masonic hatred was shared by all the Allies. American delegate Bowman said of the pervasive Allied hatred: "At every instant one had to give tangible proof of hatred against the enemy."

Hungary was thus crucified at the Versailles Treaty not for its sins but for its faith, a victim of rabid Masonic hatred and rapaciousness.

Chapter 71

Nine Million New Serbs

Serbia, which had been a center of intrigues before the war and had precipitated the war with the Sarajevo assassination, was now coming forward to claim its due. The Benes of Serbia was that old intriguer, Nicholas Pashich. Over the years he had been condemned to death or imprisonment but had always been pardoned by sympathetic Serbian officials. Pashich had duplicated the Czechs' fraudulent Cleveland and Pittsburgh declarations on the Greek island of Corfu. There he had assembled a handful of Balkan individuals for the purpose of pressing Serbian claims to some 9 million non-Serbians. Serbia's population would then increase from 3 to 12 million people. Pashich's main targets were Slovenia, Dalmatia and Croatia. A lone Croatian politician called Trumbich, who represented only himself, was presented as evidence of Croatia's desire to be absorbed by Serbia. Pashich's claim was patently absurd. The majority of Croatians were totally opposed to Serbian domination. For the last 2,000 years they had been part of the Western world, first Rome, then Venice and Austria- Hungary. They were totally different in culture and religion from the Serbs and always refused to have anything to do with them. Serbian expansionists had long coveted the Croatian Adriatic coastline with the dual aim of dominating Slovenia and Dalmatia and preventing Austria from access to the sea. The Allies had considerable financial stakes in the Balkans, from copper to oil, and there was a consensus that Pashich would be a reliable overlord. The British agent Seton-Watson produced the lone Croatian Trumbich and took him to meet Pashich in Corfu. Pashich promised special rights and privileges, autonomy, religious freedom and countless other benefits. These were exactly the same promises Masaryk had given to the Slovaks in 1915 and 1918, which resulted in the subjugation of the Slovak nation. Pashich had promised Trumbich a Cabinet post as well as one million gold francs for himself. The bribe came from the vast loans made by corrupt French politicians to the corrupt politicians of Serbia. Pashich, who was an experienced liar, denied money had changed hands but Trumbich, who felt his fellow Croatians would regard him as a traitor, admitted that the money had been offered, but claimed that he had declined it. The episode was Byzan-

tine and full of side intrigues, with the end result that Trumbich's signature on Pashich's greater Serbia plan was accepted by the Allies as proof that the Croatians wanted to be part of Serbia. Pashich also enlisted the services of an Italian "negotiator" named Torre, an obscure politician from Rome. Torre accompanied Trumbich to London, somehow giving the impression he represented Italy. Torre and Trumbich did not in any way represent their countries but the British agreed to Pashich's plan, which became known as the "London pact." The pair then proceeded to Rome, where Pashich had sent two dozen Serbian front men masquerading as Slovenians, Croatians and Dalmatians. The group called themselves "Yugoslav delegates" and issued a declaration of union with Serbia: "The delegates of the Slavic peoples who are still enslaved proclaim their unanimous will to unite with the future Greater Serbia of all Yugo-Slays [Southern Slays]." The statement from this fraudulent meeting was known as the "Rome declaration." No one had appointed the "delegates" except a cabal of conniving Serbian politicians. Furthermore the fake "Croatians" and "Slovenians" had joined their Serbian "brethren" in declaring as traitors "all those who were trying to make Croatia and Slovenia and the Adriatic provinces independent states." The chief of the Serbian government press, a man called Magat, would publicly laugh at the event two months later: "It was a farce but it was a very well rehearsed farce. The oppressed nations were represented in Rome by a few dozen Serbian emigrants who had been baptized 'Croats,' 'Slovenes' or 'Dalmatians' for the occasion." Thus the spurious "Pact of Corfu," "Treaty of London" and "Rome declaration" had been arranged for the Allies even before the day of the armistice. With such overwhelming "evidence" the Allies were not disposed to hear the protests of the 9 million people about to be subjected to Serbian tyranny. The lone Croatian who had sold out for 1 million francs was made a Cabinet minister-but for a short time only. He soon had outlived his usefulness and was thrown in jail and tortured. Before dying he belatedly appealed to his compatriots: "Let us never accept being 'Serbianized,' to be beaten on the head like the Macedonians or whipped on the back like our own women." Next the Croatian leader Radich was assassinated on the floor of the Yugoslavian Parliament on July 20, 1928. One million and a half Croatians would be forced to flee their country in order to save their lives. 500,000 Macedonians had to flee as well. Pashich became president of Greater Serbia (the so-called Yugoslavia) and explained with truly contorted logic: "If there had been a plebiscite in Croatia and Slovenia we would not have had a quarter of the votes." Pashich's observation became reality 15 years later, when the Croats were finally able to cast a vote in favor of their independence: 7707o voted for independence despite an influx of Serbians into Croatia. The English reporters who witnessed the embarrassing election of May 15, 1935, and reported it thoroughly in the British press were expelled by the Yugoslavian secret police. The Yugoslavian army and police then went on a rampage of terror against all those who had voted so "insultingly" against "Yugoslavia." The terror would provoke violent reactions among the refugees abroad. In 1934 Croatian freedom fighters would assassinate the king of Yugoslavia, Alexander, in Marseilles, France. It would be the same Serbian terror that in 1941 would induce Croatians to form

three entire divisions, all of them volunteers, to join other Europeans on the Eastern Front. There they would fight the Soviet masters of the Communist "Yugoslavian" imperialist, Tito.

Like their Czech Masonic allies the Serbian Masons were under the constant protection of French Masonic Grand Master André Tardieu. Wilson's principles had been circumvented at every turn by the Grand Orient Masonic cabal. The American president realized there was nothing he could do except save appearances: "He was ready," commented an observer at the peace conference, "to take seriously the most extravagant documents as long as they were written in impeccable legal terminology." Tardieu had managed to chair most of the peace commissions and had placed fellow Masons in all of them. The Serbian delegate, Dr. Ivan Zolger, admired Tardieu's pro-Serbian bias:

"M. Tardieu has occasionally changed the sense of decisions of the Supreme Council in our favor. He would do this quite arbitrarily, which often embroiled him in very bitter conflicts with the delegates of other nations." (Slovenski Narod, June 2, 1921)

It has been often asked how tens of millions of unwilling people could have been subjected to the will of their traditional enemies without the plebiscites which the victorious Allies had solemnly pledged to implement and respect as a condition of the armistice. The answer was to be found in the relentless Masonic efforts to impose Masonic regimes all over Europe by any means. The American delegate Bowman recorded some of these means:

Each central European delegation brought a pile of cooked-up statistics and maps. If the statistics failed to convince, colored maps were produced. A thick volume would not be enough to analyze all the different types of these made-up maps. A good-looking map would save many a poor argument from sinking into oblivion. It is mainly in the Balkans that this practice reached its peak. (What Happened in Versailles, p. 126)

Although Bowman was a noted geographer, Wilson chose to ignore his advice. It would take an additional two years for Lloyd George to make his displeasure at having been tricked by an avalanche of false maps publicly known: "All the documentation provided to us by certain of our Allies during the peace negotiations was lies and deceptions. We have decided [the peace treaty] on a fraud." (Lloyd George at Queen's Hall, 1921) Lloyd George's correct and belated realization did not, however, free the millions who had been subjected against their will.

Among the hundreds of fraudulent practices the case of the Hungarian town of Kassa (Kosice) is quite illustrative. Benes had on February 5, 1919 claimed Kassa as a Czech city. The British demanded verification, and two investigators, Edward Karmesin and Robert Kramer, were sent to check Benes's claim. Both were American citizens of Czech origins who had shortly before been naturalized. They were officially received by a Kassa Czech. For a week the two Czech-Americans were wined and dined and entertained at the Hotel Salk in Kassa.

The trio never left the hotel and, without the slightest investigation, wrote a report concluding that Kassa was, as Benes claimed, a totally Czech city. Apparently the report must have impressed the British because the people of Kassa were refused a plebiscite and one hundred thousand Hungarians were immediately declared Czechs. Like Lloyd George, the famous French statesman Aristide Briand belatedly deplored the flagrant injustice: "One only need to glance at a map to realize that the borders of Hungary were unjustly drawn." (French Assembly, June 7, 1921) Even Clemenceau, who had ignored the self-determination of so many peoples, felt the dismemberment of Hungary was excessive. On April 25, 1920 he declared on the subject of Hungary: "We have done so many stupid things maybe we can right one of them." Nothing would be righted: all the Slovaks, three-quarters of the Croatians, Dalmatians, Slovenians, two-thirds of the Hungarians, all the Germans of Posen, Danzig, Sudetenland and the Tyrol had lost their rights, their nationality and their freedom. Benes, who had wanted in 1916 to stretch Czechoslovakia all the way to the outskirts of Berlin, demanded in 1919 that a corridor cut in half what was left of little Hungary in order to link up with his Serbian allies:

The Czech state must comprise Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and northern Hungary. A direct link must be established between the Czechs and the Serbs in order to fulfill their national aspirations and fraternal affinities. A corridor cutting Hungary in half will connect the two people. It will be constituted by the Hungarian districts of Poszony, Sopron, Moson and Vas, which will facilitate trade between industrial Bohemia and agricultural Serbia. Its military importance will be considerable. In case Hungary objected, Benes proposed to the Serbians "a military action against Hungary to create the corridor by force." But Hungary had already lost 11 million of its people, of an original total of 18 million, when the Jewish Communist dictator Bela Kun took control and quickly shackled what was left of the country. Austria-Hungary was no more. Vienna was like a head without a body. The Versailles Treaty had sanctioned the dismemberment of the highly civilized empire into two little states under alien control.

Chapter 72

Central Europe

In the disaster of defeat it was not surprising that the Austrians should identify with their German compatriots. Austria and Germany shared a common language, culture and history, and now a common agony. Austrians felt that in union with Germany, a revival could still be possible. The Anschluss was born in 1918 out of tragedy and persecution long before the Allies had ever heard the name "Hitler." As early as November 12, 1918, the day after the armistice, the Austrian parliament, with a Socialist majority, voted for the unification of Austria with Germany. It was a rare issue, one all the political parties agreed on. On January 9, 1919 Austrian Chancellor Karl Renner repeated for the benefit of the Paris peace conference: "The Republic of Austria is part of the Greater German Reich." Anschluss had become the main platform of the Austrian Socialist Party, and on this issue alone it was swept to power in 1919. Chancellor Renner never changed this policy even when his political opponent, Adolf Hitler, made his entry in Vienna in 1938. He still called on all Austrians to support unification regardless of political affiliation. Socialists and Catholics alike voted 99% in favor of Anschluss in 1938, as they had in 1919. They were all Germans, who wanted to live, or rather survive, within Germany. Forty percent of the workers of the Austrian empire were in 1919 concentrated in Vienna and its environs, out of work after Austria had been stripped of its industries and mines. This explosive situation would lead to civil war under Engelbert Dollfuss and to Anschluss in 1938.

The concept of Austro-German unity was looked upon with favor by a number of sensible Europeans. The union could not provide any kind of military threat to the Allies: the combined armed forces allowed for both countries by the Versailles Treaty amounted to 135,000 men, less than half the Polish army. In 1919 the French government commanded armed forces of 4 million soldiers, 30 times more than Austria and Germany. The British empire had absolute control of the seas, while Germany was deprived of its entire navy, without so much as a single submarine or minesweeper. Austria had been truncated;

Germany was surrounded by hostile neighbors. The American government had no objections to the Austrians exercising their right to self-determination. After all, it would be a rare application of Wilson's Fourteen Points. Here again, however, the Czechs, Serbians, Romanians, Italians and French were determined to thwart the popular will of Austrians and Germans alike. Tardieu feared that the addition of 6 million Austrian Catholics to Germany would weaken the Masonic forces in that country, while Benes and Pashich were not about to let the Austrians influence a German revival. All had much to fear for their ill-gotten gains. Article 80 of the Versailles Treaty and Article 88 of the Treaty of St. Germain three months later officially negated the right of Austrians to decide their own future and their own affairs. Although Anschluss with Germany was their overwhelming desire, the treaties invoked "Austrian independence" to deny independence to the Austrians: "The independence of Austria is inalienable without the consent of the League of Nations; in consequence Austria undertakes to abstain from any action likely to compromise its independence." Since France had veto power at the League of Nations, it thus had a veto to prevent German-Austrian unification. French historian Rain did not miss the hypocrisy of the articles: "It came down to saying that Austria was independent in spite of itself." (The Europe of Versailles, p. 115)

There was one glaring exception in the routine destruction of European countries perpetrated by the Versailles Treaty makers: the Jews. They benefited from the protection of the Jewish delegates, who were represented in most of the national delegations attending the peace conference. Manley Hudson, the American delegate, explained: "The Jews are both a race and a religious sect. Their problems are different from those of other minorities." (What Happened in Paris, p. 175) While the Ukrainians, Germans, Austrians, Slovaks, Croats, Dalmatians and Hungarians had been traded off with a rope around their necks to their enemies, the Jews had benefited from a multitude of protective measures. When the Versailles Treaty makers delivered millions of Hungarians to Romania, it was only on the condition that Jews in Romania would be given preferential treatment. Manley Hudson noted: "This disposition was essential to prevent a return to the abuse from which Jews in Romania had suffered." (What Happened in Paris, p. 169-173) Previously Jews in Romania had been excluded from public office and the professions, and restricted in dealing in land and conducting certain business in the cities. The Romanians had to promise to reverse all "discrimination against Jews" despite the fact they insisted these measures were necessary to protect themselves against "predatory Jewish practices." In the context of the time, the Romanian attitude was shared throughout central Europe. The great powers' heavy-handed demands on their allies were accepted as a matter of expedience only for the purpose of partaking of the Versailles largesse. In fact they would only aggravate ill feelings between Jews and their host countries. The promises made to the Allies would soon be forgotten, and people would be free to vent their anger after June, 1919. Finally the Allies did not even succeed in pleasing the Jews of central Europe, who found themselves trapped like everybody else in an artificial Europe based on iniquity

and lies. It would only be a matter of time before it exploded in the faces of its perpetrators. People as different as Ramsay MacDonald and Trotsky predicted the demise of the Europe of Versailles. The British prime minister declared: "The new war will not break out on the Rhine but in the Danube Valley, where exasperated and violent minorities vainly demand justice." Trotsky would write in Izvestia: "It is in central Europe that the 1918 victors have started with their own hands the fire that will destroy the new world they have pretended to build.”

Chapter 73

The Dardanelles and Venizelos

After tearing the German and Austrian empires apart, the Allies turned their attention to the Ottoman empire. The empire extended from the Balkans to Iraq and the Sinai; it was the third and last bulwark against the spread of Communism. But the Allies gave little thought to Communism in those days, since they were principally bent on acquiring the Ottoman empire for themselves. Germany enjoyed a position of great influence in Turkey before the war. Its exports had, within five years, increased 3500'o and constituted 21% of Turkey's total imports. British business as a result had seen its share of the Turkish market fall from 60% to 5%. Whose fault was it? The Germans were selling superior products and services at a cheaper price than the British. There was no magic, just a preference for what was better and cheaper. Furthermore, the Germans had come to the marketplace without armed violence, unlike the Allies in other parts of the world: imperialist gun-boats were always behind the latter's traders. Germany's trading success in Turkey was being duplicated in more than 50 other countries around the globe. People were increasingly buying German goods because their quality was better. Even today German goods are highly appreciated in the world marketplace, despite the blows of two devastating lost wars. There Germans have always acknowledged that a nation's strength relies on its work force. In 1914 they were victims of their own success. The vaunted British "fair play," which could have been expected to result in the congratulation of a competitor, was not a factor in 1914. Instead Germany was earmarked for destruction for the sin of producing better goods than its competitors. The Allies did not look within their own ranks to evaluate whether a failing work ethic or discipline had contributed to their failures; they blamed the German qualities of hard work and perfectionism. The British financiers were determined to stop German trade from expanding as if it were encroaching on some divine right monopoly to British world trade. Germany's expansion in

Turkey was the result of a thousand British moves to thwart German trade by sea. If Germany could not expand by sea it would do so by land.

The relationship between Turkey and Germany in 1914 was excellent. Turkish leader Enver Pasha had invited General Liman von Sanders to reorganize the Turkish army, which had incurred severe defeats against Pan-Slavic forces. The move had infuriated the British and the French governments although they saw nothing wrong in enlisting hundreds of thousands of conquered people in their own armies. In 1914 Indians, Arabs, Africans, Asians and others were thrown into a European war by the Allies against Germany. On July 28, 1914 Winston Churchill committed an act of rare impudence, which only brought the Germans nearer to the Turks. For many years Turkey had felt menaced by the Serbs, who were Russia's Balkan agents. Lately they had been informed that an imminent attack was about to be launched against Constantinople. On July 27, 1914 the Turks sent emissaries to Berlin asking for help to fend off the danger. Churchill knew nothing of the proposals at this stage; he admitted so himself, but proceeded to swindle Turkey out of several million pounds sterling. In 1912 the Turkish government had appealed to its citizens to subscribe enough money to buy two warships from Britain. The price was enormous for the impoverished Turks, but it was felt imperative to counter the Russian navy. Turkish sailors were in London on July, 1914 to take delivery of the pre-paid warships. Without any explanation Churchill seized the vessels. In his own words: "On July 28, 1914 I requisitioned the two dreadnoughts built for the Turkish Navy." Without further ado the piratical British pocketed the blood money of millions of poor Turks. Turkey had committed no acts that could remotely be interpreted as hostile to London. Yet Churchill decided Britain needed ships even if they did not belong to the British as well as the money that had gone to pay for them. Churchill bragged of this high-sea robbery with arrogance:

Five hundred Ottoman sailors had arrived in London to man the first ship. The captain asked for delivery of the ship. He threatened to fly the Turkish flag and board his men. At this terrible moment I gave on my own responsibility the order to stop by force of arms, if necessary, any attempt of this kind. This decision was only motivated by the interests of our navy, to which the two dreadnoughts would bring essential support.

The dates must be carefully noted: on July 28, 1914 Churchill requisitioned the two warships; on July 31 he was ready to stop by force the Turkish sailors from taking delivery of their fully paid-for ships on the grounds they were needed by the Royal Navy. It was only five days later that the British government declared war on Germany, on August 4, 1914. Thus, just as officially backed British pirates had seized so many ships on the high seas, Churchill had seized in peacetime two ships from a friendly foreign country.

This flagrant act of piracy provoked in the Turks a violent rage, which Churchill flippantly acknowledged: "It has been said that the rage thus provoked in Turkey contributed in throwing this empire into the war against us," (World Crisis, p. 355). How could it be otherwise? The Turks had experienced, before the whole

world, the humiliation of being publicly robbed by haughty London corsairs. On August 11, Turkey would buy from Germany two cruisers which had successfully crossed the Dardanelles, the Göben and the Breslau. Positioned strategically in the Black Sea they would from now on prevent any suppplies from reaching Britain's Russian allies. The Turks had good reason to protect Constantinople: in the first week of hostilities, the British king had told his first cousin Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, "Constantinople is yours." Although the old metropolis had lost some of its commercial importance to Salonika, Smyrna and the Suez Canal, the Turks regarded it as the religious and historical center of the Ottoman empire. The Russians also regarded Constantinople as part of their heritage; the religious and cultural inspiration of Russia. They were also determined to remove the Turkish stranglehold on their trade. The Allies had encouraged the tsar in pressing his claims and had signed in February, 1917 an agreement recognizing Russia's ownership of the Bosphorus, Armenia, Anatolia and even Jerusalem, which, like Constantinople, was another holy place for the Russians.

Turkey was hesitant, despite its wounded national pride, about becoming involved in the war, but as the British and Russian governments tightened the noose around its borders, its leaders felt it had no other alternative. On October 29, 1914 Turkey finally joined the war on the side of Germany. During February, 1915 the Turks tried to reach the Suez Canal, without much success. Germany dispatched General von Falkenhayn on a second offensive and the British were dealt a severe blow that brought the Turks almost to the eastern bank of the canal and almost cut the British empire in two. Churchill later counterattacked in the Dardanelles. On March 18, 1915 he sent the Allied fleet to blockade the Bosphorus although Admiral Sir "Jacky" Fisher and General Lord Kitchener had been opposed to the idea. The most powerful French and Britsh ships blew up one after the other in the heavily mined waters. It was a terrible defeat, with a third of the entire Allied fleet and thousands of young sailors sent to the bottom of the Aegean Sea. Churchill's venture provoked widespread indignation and he was forced to resign from the Cabinet. Not for long, however. Churchill donned a uniform, and accompanied by his dog, went on to strut on the Flemish front playing soldier and posing dramatically. The English commander quickly returned Churchill to the House of Commons, demanding that he not wear the uniform again.

London, smarting from its naval disaster in the Dardanelles, decided to organize a face-saving expedition on Turkish soil. Troops from all parts of the empire were gathered along with several French regiments to storm the shores of the Gallipoli region. The campaign ended in a frightful massacre. Then London decided to launch what was left of the Gallipoli corps on a new campaign in nearby Salonika. This province was part of Greece, a neutral country, and Greece's King Constantine protested vehemently the British invasion of his country. British government, which had howled so much when the Kaiser had taken the Belgian short-cut to France, saw nothing wrong in violating Greek neutrality. They justified their action with the help of one of their local agents, Eleutherios Venizelos, a lawyer and politician from Crete. Venizelos patterned himself on

the bombastic Churchill, and believed the British were invincible: "Britain has always won the last battle of all the wars it has waged," he was fond of saying. Venizelos was financed by London to plot against his king and to open the gates for Allied troops to land in Athens, where they fired on the population and expelled the king. Churchill himself acknowledged that: "French troops occupied Athens and expelled Constantine with full British backing." (World Crisis, vol. IV, p. 378)

Churchill saw Greece as a British satellite, which would ensure the maritime link with India, Australia and the Far East. A new king, Alexander, ready to do British bidding, was installed. After the war Alexander, King of the Hellenes, was bitten by one of his monkeys, dying three weeks later. The British pushed Venizelos to take over. In order to give himself the legitimacy he lacked, Venizelos organized a plebiscite which would confirm him as ruler of Greece. Greek voters obviously did not share his enthusiasm for his British patrons: he was soundly defeated and fled into retirement on the French Riviera. The Greeks had instead voted overwhelmingly for King Constantine I, who returned in triumph to Athens. In 1916, however, the British had offered extraordinary inducements to Venizelos as a reward for overthrowing King Constantine: Thrace, the Black Sea, Smyrna and Anatolia (the present-day Turkey). Just as they had promised Palestine to the Jews and Tyrol to the Italians, the British had long recognized that promises were the cheapest currency to pay for immediate favors. There would be no doubt that if Venizelos had expressed the desire to claim Tibet or Hawaii the British would have promptly promised these lands.

All these territories so generously dispensed in the darkness of secret treaties had, however, been promised twice or three times to other countries in order to bring them over to the Allied side in the war. No country knew at the time that there were other beneficiaries. The revelation of British double-dealing would come in 1919, when all those who had been lured into the war would come to claim their due at the Peace Conference. The British had promised various Arab chieftains territory and influence as a way to offset the Turkish leadership. One sheik who took the bait was the Emir of Hejaz, a desperately poor tribal chief whose territory happened to include Mecca, the holy city for all Muslims.

Chapter 74

The Near East Blindfolded

The British Establishment had promised Hussein, the Emir of Hejaz, independence, land and wealth if he would turn against the Ottomans. London sent one of its agents masquerading as an archeologist to infiltrate the nomadic Arabs. Known as Lawrence, he had adapted himself to the local customs, had dressed like an Arab and become known as a promiscuous homosexual. For three years he would tirelessly play the British card in Arabia. The Turks would make him pay dearly when they eventually captured him: he would be tortured and brutally sodomized. After the war the British would not treat him much better: he died in a mysterious motorcycle "accident" in England. Lawrence had managed to subordinate the Arabs to London's policy. Hussein was given 20,000 pounds sterling, an enormous bribe in those days of sand, camels, dates and clear oasis water. At the same time, and equally in secret, another 20,000 pounds were slipped into the pocket of Ibn Saud, the Wahabi chieftain and main rival of Hussein. This policy of divide and conquer with which the British had pitted all the European countries against one another for centuries was now being applied in Arabia. After using the Arabs against the Turks the British intended to reap the benefits of the discord they had sown among rival Arabs: namely, assuming control of all the oil fields in the Middle East. Every sheik and emir was bribed or manipulated into bitter feuds from 1915 to 1918. With the Turks out of the picture in 1919, Arab daggers would turn against each other while the British would be free to exploit the newly discovered oil. The wars and conflicts that have wracked the Middle East ever since, and could well provoke World War III, are a direct result of British policy in that region, including one of the few promises kept: the creation of Israel out of the ancient land of Palestine. In 1915 the Arabs had full confidence in the British. They were impressed by plumed-hatted emissaries bearing gifts and promises as well as the excellent British public relations which preceded each encounter. Tales of amazing victories would be told to wide-eyed sheiks, who would then pass them on with even more embellishment. The British imported Indian regiments to fight alongside the Arabs against the Turks. Hussein was delighted to see the anti-

Turkish troops advancing towards Mosul and Damascus. Poetically he would say: "I am a fish swimming in the sea; the larger the sea the larger the fish." He dreamed of a unified Arabia under his rule. Other Arab sheiks who had participated in the British campaign thought likewise. The Turks were finally defeated and capitulated at Mondros on October 30, 1918. The British received the terms of surrender but they did not bother to inform their allies of it. The French, the Italians, the Greeks and the Arabs were kept in the dark until the first weeks of the Paris peace conference. Everybody who had been railroaded into the war by London was coming to claim his reward. For the Arabs it was independence; for the Greeks, Italians, French and Jews it was land. First Venizelos rushed to Paris, accompanied by a shady oil financier called Basil Zaharoff, who was later knighted by the British monarch, George V. On May 6, 1919 Venizelos was authorized by the conference to send a division to Smyrna. On May 16 the Greeks landed and occupied Smyrna with a party of 20,000 men and proceeded to massacre the Turkish population. William Linn Westermann recalled: "The most moderate evaluation allows us to state that more than 2,000 Turks-men, women and children-were uselessly put to death." (What Happened in Paris, p. 159) After this brilliant beginning for the democracies, Greek troops massacred more Turks in Adin as they advanced into the heartland of Asia Minor. Churchill explained the campaign: "Greeks wish to destroy the Turkish army and occupy Ankara." (World Crisis, vol. IV, p. 394) It was at this desperate time in Turkish history that an unknown man appeared. The Greeks had taken the railway lines around Ankara and only had 70 miles to go before entering the city. The providential savior of Turkey was called Mustafa Kemal. A no-nonsense military man who had fought the British and Russians with great valor, he took it upon himself to organize Turkish resistance against the foreigners after the collapse of the Ottoman empire.

Like Marshal Joffre at the Marne in 1914, Mustafa Kemal had decided to stand fast at any cost. The Greek army continued to pound Turkish positions, and managed to advance some 15 miles more at a tremendous cost in lives. Thirty thousand men fell within a week of combat. Both sides were exhausted but Kemal managed to rally his troops for a counterattack. After three days of furious fighting the Greeks were forced to retreat. They held on to the east of Smyrna and Adin with dwindling supplies, and appealed for help to their British sponsors. The British Cabinet was in no mood to help the Greeks, whom it had railroaded into this frightful mess and to whom it had promised Turkish territory. The Greeks had served their purpose and they were going to be left on their own. Churchill said: "The Greeks are approaching bankruptcy. In fact it is none of our business." He added that he had heard that this was the view of his allies: "We have had enough of this. On one side one hears the screams of someone drowning and on the other there is the good advice of a spectator who has not the slightest intention of getting wet."

The Greek "drowning" was horrible. Acting on the momentum of their counterattack the Turks reconquered Smyrna in an orgy of blood, like the Mongolian hordes of old. Few people escaped the massacres. Ears and breast nipples were

chopped off and displayed by the hundreds on lengths of wire. Atrocities of gruesome barbarity were committed everywhere. The Greeks suffered one of the worst massacres and defeats in their history because they had set out to get what had been promised to them by the "invincible British." Belatedly Churchill pronounced what amounted to a tragic mea culpa:

The return to Europe of the triumphant Turks thirsting after Christian blood constituted, after all the events of the Great War, the worst humiliation for the Allies. Nowhere had victory been so complete as in Turkey; nowhere had the power of the victors been so arrogantly defied. The achievements, the laurels for which so many thousands of men had died on the rocks of Gallipoli, in the sands of Mesopotamia and Palestine, in the swamps of Salonika, on the ships that supplied these vast expeditions, all the sacrifices made by the Allies in men, arms, and money, all that was marred with shame. The lofty pretensions of Europe and the United States, all the eloquence of their statesmen, the humming of their committees and commissions had led the masters of the world to this ignominious end. (World Crisis, vol. IV, p. 183)

Ionia, the Greece of Asia, was no more. 1,250,000 Greek refugees fled to Greece. Among them was a young boy of 11 named Aristotle Onassis, who would later give Greek shipping great prominence. If this could be considered a benefit to Greece it was the only one that came out of the ill- fated campaign.

The Italians had watched the Greek debacle with interest. The lesson was not lost on them. Consequently they lowered their sights, focussing on what they could take, not what had been promised to them by London. They were neither ready nor willing to sacrifice half a million men for far-off lands in Asia Minor and would wisely occupy only a few Dodecanese Islands.

Now that the Greeks and the Italians had lost their appetite for the feast the question became: Who was going to dine? Article XII of Wilson's Fourteen Points envisaged: "The Turks of the Ottoman Empire should constitute a sovereign and independent nation and the non-Turks should enjoy the right of autonomy." The non-Turkish territories had been promised to the Arab Sheik Hussein by the British in 1915. General Allenby, the British commander in Asia Minor, made an official declaration confirming this commitment as soon as the Turks had capitulated: "The French and British governments promise to help and encourage the establishment of indigenous governments in Syria and Mesopotamia. These governments would be the expression of the free will and initiative of the people concerned," (What Happened in Paris, p. 161). The American delegate William Westermann states: "This solemn promise was not honored." And for good reasons. While the British were promising a kingdom worthy of Harun al-Rashid to the Arab sheiks, they were secretly signing an agreement with the French government to share the entire Middle East. Known as the Sykes-Picot protocols, the agreement would give Syria, a non-oil country, to the French and the whole of Mesopotamia, a land rich in oil, to the British. The Arabs, who had waged a costly holy war of liberation for three years, found themselves well behind the eight ball. Wilson seemed surprised that the British

could engage in such double dealing and made known his displeasure:

The United States of America do not support the claims of Great Britain and France on people who do not wish their protection. One of the fundamental principles consistently followed by the United States is the respect of popular will. In consequence the United States want to know whether the Syrians agree [to be under French rule] and whether the Mesopotamians agree [to be under British rule]. This may not be the United States's business but since this matter is submitted to the peace conference the only way to deal with it is to find out what the people in these regions want. (World Crisis, p. 359)

Wilson proposed that a commission be created to study the subject. The Allies gladly accepted, knowing full well it would have no bearing on the final outcome. Churchill, who called such a commission "an old woman's remedy," was not concerned that after a long tour in the Middle East the commission reported that none of the countries concerned wished to see a foreign presence and that they all wanted nothing less than full independence.

The British interpreted the commission's findings as meaning that the people of the Middle East wanted to avail themselves of British rule. After some acrimonious haggling with the French, who felt themselves cheated of oil, the British would give the French the 25% of the stock which the Germans had invested in companies exploring for petroleum during their construction of the Berlin-Bagdad railway before the war. A pipeline would carry 25% of the oil obtained by British drilling from Mosul to the French in Syria. The French still felt cheated but accepted the British offer as better than nothing. The government sent troops to occupy Syria and expel the king and his family. Opposition was suppressed by force of arms. The British got the lion's share of the Middle East and successfully managed to keep the French quiet with German stocks and Arab land. The Arabs were not even a factor in the British partition of the Near East.

If the Italians, Greeks and Arabs had been used and short-changed, the Armenians suffered a hundred times more. Before the war they had suffered frightful persecution at the hands of the Turks, who would not tolerate a non-Turkish people living near their Caucasus borders. Hundreds of thousands were massacred by bloodthirsty Turkish hordes, while equal numbers were hunted out of their homes and villages and driven into trackless deserts, and left to die from thirst and hunger. Churchill noted that: "It is estimated that 1.2 million were thus eliminated, more than half the entire Armenian population. It was an organized crime executed for political reasons. It was an opportunity for the Turks to rid [Turkish] territory of a Christian race." (World Crisis, vol. IV, p. 400) In 1917 the Treaty of San Stefano had promised Armenia "the end of its long servitude." Wilson had demanded that the Versailles Treaty include the consititution for an independent Armenia while the British prime minister declared: "Great Britain has decided to liberate the Armenians from the Turkish yoke, to give them back the religious and political freedom [of which] they have been deprived for so long." Everybody at the peace conference was in

agreement that Armenia should be restored. Speech after speech stressed the necessity of helping Armenia. But it was all empty verbiage: "The independence and protection of Armenia," said the American delegate, Westermann, "was one of those problems which were talked about without the intention of ever solving it." (What Happened in Paris, p. 147) It was another case of the hypocritical Allies projecting themselves as paragons of virtue and democracy but following a base mercantile path. Armenia was simply a prop to make them feel good in the pompous halls of government and diplomacy; it offered no other interest-not manganese, as in Georgia, no oil as in Mosul, no lobby like the Jews. The British were quick to sidestep the issue by asking Wilson to assume responsibility for the protection and survival of Armenia. Westermann said: "British and French liberal opinion insisted that our delegation be shown the urgent necessity of establishing an American mandate in Armenia." (What Happened in Paris, p. 153) Suddenly the United States was saddled with a problem not of its own making. the Treaty of Sèvres proclaimed Armenia "a free and independent state." The president of the United States was "entrusted to determine the border between Turkey and Armenia." Wilson, however, did not see this dubious honor for what it was, and, elated, rushed to his typewriter to type his acceptance: "We consider it a Christian duty and a privilege for our government to assume the tutelage of Armenia." (Bonsai, Suitors and Suppliants, p. 319) The Armenians' joy in finding at last a willing champion was short-lived. As soon as Wilson returned to Washington he was totally absorbed by local politicking and quickly forgot his noble words. There was simply not any political mileage in the Armenian issue. In fact, in the context of Allied and American politics, it was strictly a non-issue. The genocide of Armenians went on unabated. Churchill acknowledged the tragedy: "The Armenian race disappeared from Asia Minor as completely as it is possible for a race to disappear from a territory." (The European Crisis, vol. IV, p. 399) The American delegate in charge of "Armenian affairs" recalled:

We can say right now that the United States are directly responsible for the tragic fate of Armenia. It was a total sellout. We could have saved the Armenians if we had accepted a mandate over the whole of northern Anatolia. The Armenian mandate had been offered to us and we dodged its obligations. Armenia has been betrayed by the civilized world. (The New World, pp. 147-148, 159)

Churchill lamented: "History will search in vain for the name of Armenia." But his government was just as responsible as, if not more than, the well-meaning but weak-minded Wilson. The Americans had not stirred the Middle Eastern pot and had not promised help to one and all. The Armenian survivors were absorbed by the Soviet Union in the arid mountains of the southern Caucasus. Many died of cold and hunger while those who survived eked out a grim existence. The American delegate concluded: "The Western World has betrayed the Armenians. Who among us can ever look an Armenian in the eye again?"

The Armenian genocide marked the final episode of the Allied intrusion in Middle Eastern affairs. Every people had been used, betrayed and exposed to mas-

sacre. From this mountain of death and tragedy only the British Establishment and the Jews would benefit: Only they got what they wanted. In Central Europe, the other center of death and inequity, Germany stood alone. Wounded, menaced, at the end of its resources, it awaited the final verdict. As the drama of Versailles came to an end Germany waited at the foot of the gallows.

Chapter 75

The Liberation of Bavaria

While its fate was being dictated in Paris by vengeful enemies, Germany had to cope with the massive insurrection Lenin had unleashed on its soil. Despite the adversity of defeat and hunger, and perhaps because of it, a new patriotic spirit had arisen. Germany had been completely disarmed; helplessly watching Communist terror spreading destruction throughout the land. While the peace conference was imposing a "Diktat" of punishment and mutilation, German volunteers from all over the Reich took on the Communists. They resisted Marxist terror by practicing greater terror, the only thing the Communists understand. From Berlin to the northern cities and the Ruhr the Germans had to fight in ferocious combat against the Bolsheviks. Inch by inch they regained their country. The center of Communist terror was Soviet-occupied Bavaria. The Communists deployed a Red army, 60,000 strong and armed to the teeth; they had occupied Bavaria for six months and were backed, not only by Lenin, but by powerful Freemasons in the West. All the Communist leaders in Bavaria were Jews, just as 753/4 of the Soviet bosses in Moscow were Jews. The objective study of the evolution of National Socialism must at all times consider how constant was the involvement of Jews in creating, leading and implementing the Communist revolutions which plunged Germany into a reign of bloody terror in 1918 and 1919. Already in 1917 when Germany was in a position to win the war, Jewish agents had sabotaged the war effort. It was the militant left-wing Jew, Cohen, who organized and directed the massive strike throughout Germany's munitions factories in April 1917. One hundred twenty-five thousand strategic workers were led by Cohen out of factories on which the survival of the German army depended. On July 6, 1917 Jewish deputy David had demanded from the German government "a precise declaration, analogous to that of the Council of Soviet Workers and Soldiers on Russia." On June 27, 1917 he initialled similar demands: "The Russian Revolution offers us an opportunity we must not miss. Russia will remain in the hands of the Entente as long as the German government does not abide by the peace formula of Petrograd." (Scheidemann, The Collapse, p. 186)

No one in Germany would ever forget after the war that Jewish Communist leaders and operatives had almost taken over the German nation.To state these facts is not a "anti-Semitic" declaration, but simply a historical explanation as to why the nearly all Germans harbored anti- Jewish resentment.

In the spring of 1919 Lenin's main preoccupation was to strengthen his Bavarian satellite,which he regarded as the stepping stone for the invasion of Europe. Thousands of ex-Russian prisoners of war were once more conscripted and sent to swell the ranks of the Bavarian Red army. The Allies and particularly the French government were ready to exempt Communist Bavaria from punitive reparations if it seceded from Germany. Lenin had installed three Jewish Communist tyrants (Axelrod, Levien and Leviné) to enforce terror in Bavaria. The Red army was well paid and well fed while the general population was starved. The cycle of Communist terror was finally broken when Noske's volunteers, after days of heroic fighting, ousted the tyrants. The Communist toll was heavy, just as in Berlin, where more than 10,000 Communists fell under Noske's blows. It is relevant at this juncture to note that it was a Socialist government, coalition partner of the Communists, which gave the order to liquidate the Bolsheviks. The so-called "moderate left" had not taken long to surpass the Communists in terror when it felt threatened by its partners. The Socialists had tapped the patriotic feelings of the Germans for their salvation, and indirectly, that of Germany. The delegates to the peace conference watched the life-and-death struggle in Germany impassively. Germany had emerged after four years of war and two years of revolution exhausted but alive. The Allies, who desired the destruction of Germany above all else, were still determined to bring Germany down, if not by Bolshevik revolution at least through massive reparations. It was no doubt a dilemma that must have confronted many a revenge seeker: How could a ruined Germany be expected to pay the enormous reparations laid out by the Versailles Treaty? The time had come for Lloyd George and his bombastic colleague Churchill to squeeze the proverbial lemon brandished in front of the electorate.

Chapter 76

Big Money

Despite the formal proscription of any type of annexation by Wilson's Fourteen Points the Allies had done everything to reverse this policy. On the issue of "reparations" the American delegate John Foster Dulles had declared that the peace conference would be .. .

... in the presence of a contract limiting the right of the Allies [the armistice]. This is not a blank page, but a page black with text, signed by Wilson, Clemenceau, Orlando and Lloyd George. The United States' proposal is, in consequence that reparations should be demanded from Germany but only those that were stipulated during the contract undertaken with Germany concerning the conditions for peace. (Tardieu, Peace, p. 317)

Dulles's demand that the contract be adhered to met with immediate opposition. The Serbian delegate Protich, who had so swiftly thrust his claws on 9 million non-Serbians, insisted that only Germany was obligated to abide by the contract: "The Fourteen Points," he declared, were "only valid for Germany and not for the Allies." (Tardieu, p. 18) Thus, Germany would be bound by the agreement, but not the Allies. The fact that such blatant inequity could be promoted seriously at the peace conference was indicative of the Allies' frame of mind. The Jewish finance minister Klotz, representing France, insisted for his part that the German- Allied agreement was only valid for the day it had been signed. Dulles reminded the conference:

The diplomatic correspondence of October, 1918 had for its objective not a basis for the armistice but a basis for peace. The conference had been entrusted to deal with peace and nothing could change what had been accepted as the basis for peace. (Tardieu, p. 319)

The British, who had already helped themselves to German assets, colonies and ships, demanded that "reparations be paid by Germany for all the damages caused to civilian populations." Here again the interpretation of the amount of

reparations was left to the Allies. Clemenceau was unequivocal: "It is important to state that our right to compensation is not limited."

The Allies proceeded to draw up a huge reparations bill. In an unusual burst of candor the British economist John Maynard Keynes calculated that the French reparations bill of 250 billion was almost as large as France's gross national product. He asked rhetorically: "If you had to spend the money you want for the reconstruction of France's devastated northern regions I can state you would not be able to use it." (Tardieu, p. 386)

Belgian politicians were demanding reparations larger than the total prewar wealth of the country, despite the fact that Brussels, Antwerp and Ostend had been spared the ravages of war. Keynes calculated: "The real price of replacing industrial plants and equipment" was "not very high and a few scores of millions would well cover the total value of all the machines Belgium could ever have owned," (Keynes, The Economic Consequences of the Peace, p. 104). The politicians had even gone so far as to demand "the benefits and profits Belgians might have realized without the war." During the war the Belgian merchant classes had accumulated more than 6 billion German marks while trading with the allegedly barbaric "Huns." Corrupt governments and banks went on a frenzy of currency trafficking, made legal for parties of means and influence. At taxpayers' expense the Belgian government bought post-war German currency at prearmistice prices, despite the sharp decline in the mark's value by the year 1919. As usual the people paid the price for this banking scam.

Another vociferous claimant was the prime minister of Australia, "Bill" Hughes. Australian politicians were vying with one another to do their British master's bidding. Theoretically an independent nation, Australia had declared war on Germany, although it had no dispute with Germany. During the war it seized the German Pacific territories, persecuted its own large German population (which had contributed so much to the country's development), as well as its Irish population (who were in favor of remaining neutral). As in previous British wars, Australian troops had been transported some 9,000 miles away from their homeland to fight for the "mother country." It is astounding that Hughes should have the audacity to ask Germany for reparations. If the Australian government had been so eager to fight Britain's wars it should have been Britain which paid the bill. Yet here was the wily Welshman of Australia demanding: "If an Australian sheep farmer had to mortgage his house because of the crisis caused by the war and if he ended up losing his house, this loss would constitute a war expense to be reimbursed by Germany." (What Happened in Paris, p. 210)

One thing these outrageous claims had in common was material greed of the vilest kind. All clamored for billions against the loss of property, but nothing was said about the loss of human life on the battle fields. The governments and the super-rich bankers would fill their pockets, but not a dime would go for the millions who had lost their kin except for miserable pensions. The bureaucrats, however, fared a lot better; hefty claims were made on their behalf: "war" pensions were awarded to legions of office-holders who had never seen a

battlefield, and who had spent the war in the comfort and faceless anonymity of government sinecures.

While the Allies were counting their reparation billions, they had failed to find out whether Germany was in any position to pay. Germany had been bled white during four years of war on two fronts. The armistice had just deprived her of 5,000 locomotives, 150,000 railway cars and 5,000 trucks, which, in those days, was a considerable number. Within months Germany had lost the coal, iron ore and other minerals of Alsace-Lorraine and Saarland, the agricultural produce of West Prussia as well as the mines of Silesia, all of which had been requisitioned by the Allies. More than 2 million soldiers had died at the front, while 3 million others were too disabled to work in industry. During the winter of 1918-19 hundreds of thousands of children died of cold or starvation because the Allies kept Germany blockaded, despite the armistice, for six long months. The Communists sent by Lenin had further undermined the country's economy through strikes and organized sabotage. Germany was exhausted; her means to recover had been taken away by the Allies. Blinded by hatred and stupidity the Allies wanted to extract billions from Germany and at the same time destroy the country's viability. Politicians were prisoners of the blind hatred they had promoted for years. The real crime of war, even more than killing, is to poison the masses with hatred, making it impossible for generations to return to reason and objectivity, thus laying the groundwork for the next war. Just as they had fanned hatred to get their people to fight for the economic interests of the few, the politicians were now fanning hatred for electoral advantages. In 1919 Clemenceau had had the power to lead public opinion to a constructive policy of realism and reconciliation, but he opted for vengeance. Lloyd George, likewise, whether he believed in destroying Germany or not, was caught up in the hatred he had generated for four years, and joined the chorus for reparations. Wilson may have disapproved but he seemed powerless to do anything about it. On the Allied side a few men made known their misgivings about imposing such a burden on Germany. The English delegate, Harold Nicolson, showed remarkable objectivity throughout the proceedings. Even Churchill and House, at the end, could see that the treaty would be counterproductive. Strangely, it was the economist John Maynard Keynes, then a university professor, who appealed for a modicum of reflection and moderation among the delegates. He produced facts and figures which showed conclusively that if Germany were crushed it would not be in a position to pay any reparations. It would appear that such an elementary proposition could be understood by anyone, but it was lost on the Allies. Keynes pointed out: "The only consideration now is to establish whether Germany is in position to pay what to whom." He estimated that Belgium had incurred losses of 500 million pounds sterling; France's losses amounted to 900 million pounds and Britain's 540 million. Another 250 million pounds were calculated for the Allies' client states. The total came up to a little more than 2 billion pounds sterling, or 10 billion dollars. This figure was, incidentally, 10 times more than what Germany had demanded from France after its 1871 victory. Keynes concluded:

> We are conscious that these figures are correct. We can say that according to the commitments undertaken by the Allied powers before the armistice, Germany's liability is somewhere between 1.6 and 3 billion pounds sterling. This is the amount we are entitled to demand from the enemy. (Keynes, *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, p. 114)

Later Keynes added:

> It would have been wise just to ask the German government during the peace negotiations to agree to pay 2 billion pounds sterling as a final settlement without sticking further to details. This would have provided a firm and immediate solution. We would have asked Germany to pay an amount within its reach in exchange for certain concessions. This sum would have then been shared by the Allies according to their needs and according to equity. The American delegation demanded that Germany should pay 5 billion dollars before May 1, 1921, two years after the Versailles Treaty.

The American report stated:

> After this day, it would not appear unreasonable to recover another 25 billion dollars. It was necessary, in order to obtain this result, that the other clauses of the treaty did not drain Germany's economic resources. Furthermore the treaty should not obstruct by way of tariffs or otherwise the redevelopment of German industry. Finally Germany should be allowed to settle a reasonable part of its debt in German marks. (*What Happened in Paris*, p. 215)

Despite this proposal, drastic clauses, which gave the victors advantageous tariffs and precluded Germany from paying any reparations in marks, were imposed.

Lloyd George had promised the British voters "to squeeze the German lemon until the pips squeaked," a slogan coined by Sir Eric Geddes, and Clemenceau kept the crowds in a frenzy of vengeful expectation. People were encouraged to present astronomical claims: every woman had suddenly lost her weight in gold and diamonds; every man had lost mansions and business empires. In the official claims list one could read: reparation for mistreatment, 1.87 billion gold francs; loss of salary, 223 million gold francs; hardship to civilians, 1.27 billion gold francs. Altogether the reparations bill reached into the trillions. Tardieu himself described these fantastic figures:

We reached a total of a thousand billion, to be paid within 50 years. With interest it would be 3,000 billion, an enormous sum, almost unreal. Yet if we were to abide to the end, the principle of reparation in full, we would also claim, in accordance with justice, indirect damages, business losses, earning losses, etc.

We would get to a fabulous total of 7,000, 8,000, 10,000 billion. (Tardieu, Peace, p. 320)

With such figures exceeding the amount calculated by experts more than 2,000 times, and championed excitedly by millions of people, there was little chance that reason would prevail.

Tardieu took note that members of the British Cabinet had been unanimous in thinking that Germany was asked to pay more than it could. They demanded that "the unlimited and indefinite character" of the debt imposed on Germany "consequently be fundamentally revised." Lloyd George may have agreed but he replied: "I take the pulse of public opinion and I must take it into account." "Public opinion" created by the press and politicians was taking precedence over sanity. Tardieu and Clemenceau did not budge from their position that France would "refuse to give up its right to be fully compensated." Thus the Allies would embark on a policy of squeezing trillions from Germany: a recipe for social upheaval and eventual war.

Chapter 77

Blind Reparations

It was an irony of history that the Allied intransigence in "squeezing the German lemon until the pips squeaked" brought some unexpected benefits to Germany. Saddled with astronomical reparations, the Germans were forced to work night and day. Eventually the axiom that a nation's wealth is in its work force would prove correct: Germany would survive. On the other hand the Allies, particularly the French, practically downed their tools at the prospect of endless billions coming their way. So much had been clamored about the billion-dollar bonanzas that the general attitude became lax; industry and productivity sank to dangerously low levels. Why work when untold billions would befall them like manna from heaven? It is likely that if France had not been granted German billions by the Versailles Treaty it would have been a hundred times more dynamic at the beginning of 1940 when it was overwhelmed by the Wehrmacht in a matter of weeks. The French had the misfortune to be led by billion-chasing demagogues in the 1920s and the Jewish-Marxist Léon Blum in the '30s, all peddlers of illusion and defeat. The decline of France during those twenty years of mismanagement was amazing. Although the Germans had a mediocre government in the 1920s, that did not stop them from working. Beset on every side, the Germans relied only on themselves to escape from an intolerable situation. The Allies relied on illusions; the Germans, on work.

In order to realize their illusions the Allies descended on Germany like vultures, fighting over mines, patents and factories. Article 8, Clause 3 of the treaty gave the Allies Germany's merchant navy (the British had already pocketed all the German warships): "Germany gave to the Allies all the ships of its merchant navy over 1,600 tons and one-fourth of its fishing fleet." The order not only included ships flying the German flag but also any vessel belonging to German citizens, even if it were flying an other country's flag, either on the high seas or under construction. Germany was also ordered to build 200,000 tons a year in its shipyards for the Allies' benefit. This was more than half of Germany's pre-war production. Thus Germany would not have enough ships to transport

its necessary imports. This was a deliberate move to force Germany to rely on foreign ships for its trade and supplies. Merchant fleet operators seized the opportunity to charge exorbitant rates, which the Germans had to pay in hard currency. There was no limit, and in Keynes' words, they charged "as much as they could extort." (The Economic Consequences of the Peace, p. 62)

After confiscating the German merchant navy, the Allies proceeded to confiscate private property all over the world. During past wars, foreign property had been sequestered until the ratification of peace treaties, when it would revert to its legitimate owners. This time, however, German property was being permanently confiscated: The Allied powers reserve the right to keep or dispose of assets belonging to German citizens, including companies they control. (Article 267 B). This wholesale expropriation would take place without any compensation to the owners. (Articles 121 and 297 B) As if this were not enough, the Germans remained responsible for the liabilities and loans on the assets that were taken from them. Profits, however, remained in the hands of the Allies. Thus private German property and assets were consficated in China (Articles 129 and 132), Thailand (Article 135-137), Egypt (Article 148), Liberia (Article 135-140), and in many other countries. Germany was also precluded from investing capital in any neighboring country, and had to forfeit all rights "to whatever title it may possess in these countries." The Allies were given free access to the German marketplace without the slightest tariff while products made in Germany faced high foreign tariff barriers. Articles 264 to 267 established that Germany "undertakes to give the Allies and their associates the status of most favored nations for five years." Germany of course had no such status. Altogether there were 27 nations, the bulk of the world's trading nations, entitled to export whatever they wanted to Germany without paying a dime. German goods were subject to endless customs roadblocks. Wilson could not help but warn his colleagues: "Gentlemen, my experts and I consider this measure to be wrong. We believe you will be the first to suffer from it." The Allies were unconcerned. They went on to take control of the German customs in the Rhineland as well as on Germany's rivers. The Rhine, the Danube, the Elbe and the Oder would be placed under the control of Allied commissions. In all these commissions the Germans would have only minority participation. Foreigners who had not the slightest experience with the German economy would preside with dictatorial powers.

Keynes elaborated on this great river robbery:

> In each case the representation was arranged to place Germany in a minority position. The Elbe commission gave Germany four votes out of 10, the Oder three votes out of nine, the Rhine four out 19. Thus many of the local and internal affairs of Hamburg, Magdeburg, Dresden, Stettin, Frankfurt and Breslau would be submitted to a foreign jurisdiction. The situation would be the same if the powers of continental Europe were controlling the Thames Commission or the Port of London.

Article 339 of the treaty ordered that 20 70 of the river freighters would be chosen from among "the most recently built," and confiscated by the Allies. Even water rights were monopolized by the Allies, under Aritcle 358.

Just as significant was the ransacking of Germany's coal and iron mines, the mainstay of its economy; the British seizure of the German navy even before the peace conference; and the fraudulent transfer of eastern Upper Silesia to Poland. Germany was suddenly deprived of nearly 61 million tons of its coal production: 3.8 million from Alsace-Lorraine, 13.2 million from Saarland, and 43.8 million from Upper Silesia. Germany's coal production before the war was 191.5 million tons: it was now left with 118 million after the balance had been confiscated. In addition, the French government was guaranteed 80,000 tons of ammonium sulfate, 35,000 tons of benzene and 50,000 tons of tar by the treaty.

Germany's consumption of coal before the war had been 139 million tons. Article 8 of the treaty required that Germany export 40 million tons of coal to the Allies each year. This was almost half of what Germany required for its own needs. Keynes said: "Germany cannot and will not grant a yearly contribution of 40 million tons of coal. The Allied ministers who said that Germany could have certainly lied to their own people." The Allies meant to subordinate Germany industry to their exclusive use. It was totally aberrant: Germany could not part with the coal needed for its industrial survival. Keynes was quite clear: "Germany, if she is to subsist as an industral nation, just cannot export coal in the coming years ... Each million tons going out from Germany does it at the price of closing a factory." (The Economic Consequences of the Peace, p. 81) Germany was experiencing near-famine conditions. It was at this moment the Allies decided to confiscate a substantial part of what was left of Germany's livestock. The American representative Thomas Lamont recorded the event with some indignation:

> The Germans were made to deliver cattle, horses, sheep, goats etc. . . . . A strong protest came from Germany when dairy cows were taken to France and Belgium, thus depriving German children of milk. (*What Happened in Paris*, p. 220)

Food shortages were such that 60,000 Ruhr miners refused to work overtime unless they were paid, even in the form of butter. When it became obvious that Germany would not be able to deliver the coal ordered by the treaty, the Allies lowered the amount from 43 million tons to 20 million tons.

In 1918 Germany derived 7507o of its iron ore from Alsace-Lorraine: 21.1 million tons, out of a national total of 28.6 million. In order to keep its factories running, Germany should have been allowed to exchange its premium Westphalian coke for some of the iron ore from its former Alsace- Lorraine province. Without such an exchange, German metallurgy would come to a halt. The French government was adamantly opposed to any arrangement posing a threat to its newly acquired steel mills. The cooperation which would have helped both countries gave way

to cut-throat competition with counterproductive duplication. In the long run the French government came out the loser, but there again hatred was more important than common sense. Keynes commented philosophically: "People have invented methods to impoverish themselves and harm each other. They prefer hatred to individual happiness." (*Economic Consequences of the Peace*, p. 87) Tardieu saw Germany's loss of steel production as a victory for his policy of revenge.

The Allied seizure of the German fleet was effected in the same spirit. Tardieu explained: "We did not want money as a consideration for sunken vessels; we wanted ships, to make money." (Peace, p. 450) The British seized a total of 2 million tons of shipping capacity while the French had to make do with 410,000 tons. Now, if the Germans wanted to bring food to a starving population they had to pay freight in gold marks for the use of their confiscated vessels. On the other hand, when Germany had to export its coal under the provisions of the treaty, it was only credited with a third of its market value. The remaining two thirds went to reduce-ever so slightly-the billions Germany was ordered to pay for reparations. It was totally arbitrary, and in the light of the suffering of the German population (children were actually dying of cold for lack of fuel), it was utterly immoral.

Tardieu, the Masonic grand master, gave brotherly love and charity short shrift when he read the Allied ledger:

German capital has suffered in other ways, starting with the confiscation of its foreign assets. Approximately 5 billion [marks] was realized from its real estate. Assets sequestered by the Allies and their associates represent from 11 to 13 billion and foreign loans come to 2 billion; altogether a total of 20 billion. The loans which had been made by Germany to the Allies, amounting to 12 billion, cannot be deducted from this loss since Article 261 of the treaty had transferred them to the Allies. German capital loss therefore comes to 20 billion at the foreign level. To these 20 billion one can add other losses easily calculated: destruction of stocks, 20 billion; damages caused by the Russian invasion of East Prussia, 2 billion. According to Article 235 Germany must deliver to the Allies before May 1, 1921, 20 billion marks in gold or its equivalent in ships, cattle, manufactured goods, etc. . . . Altogether this means a 62-billion capital loss for Germany. (Peace, p. 358)

If Tardieu and the Allies were pleased with Germany's loss of 105 billion marks as well as with the additional burden of 151 billion marks in war loans (it was a terrible and "fitting" punishment), they also wanted Germany to abide by all the terms of the treaty. It was an absurdity that only blind hatred could produce. The Allies were in the position of a slavemaster consumed by hatred and torn between wanting his slave dead and highly productive at the same time. Germany, deprived of its assets, its coal, its iron, its livestock and its ships, was still expected to produce billions to compensate the victors.

When the obvious became apparent even to the Allies, Tardieu devised a formula "reducing German consumption." According to Tardieu the near- starving

Germans were eating too much and consuming too much of everything. Germany was ordered to tighten its belt by a third, from 33 billion to 22.8 billion. But what would these paltry 10.2 billion marks represent in the overall debt of thousands of billions? A drop in the ocean, which would, however, cause cruel privations among the general German population. Meanwhile the French and British electorates were clamoring for the "Huns' billions." Their politicians had whipped them up into a frenzy of greedy expectations, to the chant of "the Huns will pay." If they did not, the politicians promised, "We'll go to Germany and help ourselves."

* * *

Tardieu declared to the voters:

Our iron production has jumped from 21 million tons before the war to 43 million, cast iron from 5 to 10.5 millions tons, steel from 4.5 to 9 million tons. Wool increased by 25010 and cotton by 3010. The recovery of Alsace-Lorraine puts us on a par with Germany for the production of cast iron, of which it produced three times more than we, and Great Britain, which produced twice as much. We are first in iron ore, second in cast iron and steel. We can export up to 20 million tons of iron ore. Our cotton exports have doubled overnight. Today's wealth, but above all tommorrow's wealth, will be the consequence of the Versailles Treaty.

Thanks to the spoils of Versailles the French government had rebuilt most of the war-damaged areas of France, yet it demanded more and more billions.

Although the war was not fought on their side the British politicians were no less demanding than the French. Lloyd George had promised the British electorate to demand and get $120 billion from Germany. Wilson had timidly admonished Lloyd George that such a demand would "contravene what we had led the enemy to expect and that now we could not change our minds simply because we had force on our side." (What Happened in Paris, p. 211) Fortunately, relatively speaking, for Germany, Lloyd George was a true politician, adept in twisting and breaking electoral promises. Reality forced him to lower his demands to 10 billion, which was the amount that John Maynard Keynes had calculated in the first place. French politicians, for their own part, had no intention of compromising: hatred was their only reality. They demanded that Germany pay $350 billion. The press still found the amount scandalously low. Certain French delegates expressed their doubts privately: how could a ton of meat be produced from a chicken? But they would have been torn to shreds if they had expressed their views publicly. The American delegation tried to moderate these fantastic amounts, to no avail. Wilson was finally resigned: "The French government is sailing a perilous sea, always relying on popular feeling. It has to govern according to the wind."

Chapter 78

Germany Alone Is Guilty

The Allies could not agree on a figure covering all reparations. The American delegation had become skeptical of the astronomical amounts claimed by Tardieu and his associates, but it did nothing to lower them. Instead it decided not to specify a figure and left this task to a commission called the "Permanent Conference for Reparations." This commission was a garbage can for failed agreements and negotiations. Its official and high-sounding name was meant to give the impression that problems were being solved. In fact it was a way for cowardly politicians to place the implementation of the Versailles Treaty into the hands of faceless bureaucrats. The conference was given a blank check on which to write whatever figure it deemed appropriate. The treaty stated:

The treaty determines the damages Germany must pay without saying how much or how she will pay .. . The determination of the total amount owed by Germany is left to the discretion of the Permanent Conference for Reparations .. . The Conference will fix the amount, whatever its total may be, without considering Germany's ability to pay.

Thus the conference's decision would be final and binding. Would Germany be in a position to pay? This was never on the conference's agenda. However, provision had been made in the event Germany failed to pay on time: Germany would be invaded. The "Huns," as the Germans were called by the British and American press, had never been consulted during the entire duration of the Paris peace conference, despite Wilson's solemn undertaking that they would be. The German High Command was never received by its Allied counterpart. The decisions of the peace conference were communicated to Germany only after they had been agreed upon by the Allies, just like a judge reading a death sentance-except that generally speaking a judicial decision would have been reached by due process of law, with attorneys representing the accused and with the appearance of witnesses. In the case of the peace conference the accused was never allowed to show his face, nor was anyone allowed to offer any form of defence. All accusations made were accepted as facts.

Even at an Inquisition trial the alleged heretic, with a hood over his head, was allowed to be present during all public proceedings. In Paris there was neither hood nor debate: a condemnatory text was handed over to the "guilty" Germans. Count Brockdorff, the German representative, was shocked when the Allied commission would not specify the amount Germany would have to pay in reparations. The Allies had a blank check, and even a German offer to double what Keynes had proposed was received negatively. This represented 100 billion gold marks, which was 25 times more than the Germans had imposed on France after the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War. In that instance Germany had invaded France and unequivocally won the war. In 1918, at the time of the armistice, the Allies had not succeeded in setting a toe on German soil. On the contrary, Marshal von Hindenburg and the German troops were in control of Belgian and French soil. The Germans had laid down their arms because they believed the terms formulated by Wilson. The Allies had broken Wilson's word. Now, after numerous frauds and betrayals, Germany was reduced to begging the Allies to name the price of its punishment. The Allies had not only not decided on an amount but also did not know how this multi-billion-dollar reparation was going to be divided.

Lloyd George proposed, after much debate: "I suggest France receive 50% of whatever Germany will pay, Great Britain receive 30% and the other countries 20%. This proportion will give France a marked preference. But I could not, before British opinion, go below the proportion that I reserve for Great Britain." This proposal triggered furious haggling. The British, who had helped themselves so generously before the treaty, could afford to be generous with an intangible percentage of chimerical billions. Tardieu, blinded with hatred and greed, balked at Lloyd George's suggestion. He dispatched his finance minister, Loucheur, to the attack:

Loucheur declared this proposal unacceptable. He reminded them that France had already consented to a compromise by no longer talking about priorities. His final acceptance would be 56/o for France and 25% for Great Britain. (*Peace*, p. 388)

This sort of haggling, more worthy of an oriental bazaar than of the leaders of civilized Western nations, would continue for months. The Allies and their clients were all clamoring to increase their percentage of Germany's hide.

The government of Australia was wailing it had lost "more men than the United States" and was therefore entitled to more money. Had Australia asserted its alleged sovereignty and declined to fight Britain's war, the question would not have arisen. New Zealand was likewise demanding money for lost men. Lloyd George put in a good word for them: "I am asking you to think of these brave little nations." Finally Tardieu settled for 55% and Lloyd George for 25%, after hundreds of hours of acrimonious dickering, all for a few percentage points! Tardieu had compromised little, since the treaty did not even include his claim for damages in the percentages: "This percentage does not include our loss of livestock, equipment and property."

Tardieu and Clemenceau rejected out of hand Germany's offer of $25 billion because they wanted "reparations" that would keep Germany in a permanent state of inferiority, just as they had led their electorate to believe. Allyn Abbott Young, an American delegate at Versailles, explained:

> The discussions were essentially political and their effects rather distant. What mattered in these talks on the economic state of Germany was the immediate effect they had on the press, the [French] Assembly, and the French electorate. (*What Happened in Paris*, p. 232)

Clemenceau had two considerations: being elected president of France and keeping Germany down by any means. His intransigence led to the resignation of both Count Brockdorff and John Maynard Keynes. Klotz, the Jewish cabinet member, regarded the sum of $25 billion as merely a deposit, the first of many: "This figure is only a deposit on the total debt to be paid in yearly installments until 1988." Although how much was to be paid yearly was not mentioned, Klotz warned it would not be less than $200 billion in gold. Thus, for 70 years successive generations of Germans were expected to slave away to satisfy Klotz and his banker patrons. The Permanent Conference on Reparations established a repayment plan whereby Germany would "issue 100 billion gold marks' worth of bonds" as initial payment. The conference was empowered to change the amount any time it wanted, and would be free to enforce collection in any way it chose: The conference will make decisions without being bound by any regulations, code, rule or legislation. Its authority is recognized by Germany under the treaty. Its essential obligation will be to control Germany's economy, its financial operations, its assets, its production capacity, now and in the future. The conference's decision will be executed forthwith, without any other formality. It will be empowered to change any German laws it sees fit and impose any financial, economic or military sanction in case of Germany's non-compliance with its rules. Germany undertakes in advance not to consider such sanctions, whatever they may be, as acts of hostility. (Tardieu, Peace, p. 350-351) Thus the conference, backed by powerful banking interests, had absolute power of life and death over Germany, not unlike the way the same banking interests exert power over the world's nations today. They decide when austerity, devaluation, recessions, depressions or change of policy will take place, as well as sanctions for recalcitrants. Keynes summed up the powers of the conference: It is the arbiter of Germany's economic life, deciding its imports of food and raw material, its taxes, etc. Germany is no longer a people or state. It has become a commercial establishment placed under the control of a revenue agent by its creditors. The conference, which will be headquartered outside Germany, will have far more power than the Kaiser ever had. Under such a regime the German people will be stripped for years of all rights and private property far more completely than any nation in the days of absolutism. They will be stripped of freedom of action, or all individual progress whether economic or even moral. Of this de facto government of Germany located in Paris, Clemenceau said: "The

situation brought about by the treaty is going to develop and we are going to benefit from it."

Besides controlling Germany's economy and politics, Clemenceau wanted to control Germany militarily for many years to come. His Allied colleagues disagreed strongly on this point. They saw no point in occupying Germany as long as reparations were being made. Furthermore people in most of the Allied countries had tired of war, and it had become politically unwise for the politicians to maintain troops away from home once the peace treaty had been signed. Clemenceau had more in mind than securing reparations when he rejected Germany's offer of $25 billion. He wanted the eventual detachment of the Rhineland from Germany, which he envisaged as occuring after a prolonged military occupation. The intrigues of General Mangin to this end almost destroyed Clemenceau's long-range plans. However, Clemenceau wore everybody down at the conference and it was reluctantly agreed to let the Rhineland occupation stand. Shrewdly, he had appeared to compromise by letting the commission decide the fate of Germany and the collection of reparations, but he had extracted in exchange the appointment of one of his men as president of the conference. Since all decisions had to be unanimous Clemenceau was indirectly given veto power over the conference's decisions. The naive may have believed that Wilson's Fourteen Points, which the Germans and the Allies had agreed on as the basis of the peace treaty, would serve as the basis of a new age, one without annexations or exactions. That was an illusion. The Allies' agreement was worth nothing. It was merely a subterfuge to disarm Germany in order to pursue a policy of gain, greed and vengeance. The Allies had won a war by trickery, one which they had started by an institutionalized policy of mercantile voracity. There was not the slightest thread of principles or idealism in any of their actions. Bankers, financiers, Masons, Communists, and Jews were the benefactors in this massive bloodletting. Millions upon millions went to their deaths whipped up by a patriotism cynically manufactured by the financial leadership and its henchmen.

Chapter 79

"Everything Was Horrible"

One of the last actions of the Versailles Treaty was to brand Germany "Guilty" with a red-hot iron. Germany had to be exhibited to the world as so bestial a menace that no punishment would ever be enough to atone for its crimes. This was the only way to justify the Allied mutilation and pillage of Germany, which were unprecedented in European history. Only if Germany bore the entire guilt for the war, like the blot of original sin, only if it was Germany which had committed the worst atrocities, could the Allies justify their treatment of the "monster." So reasoned the avengers. British master propagandists had invented a long list of "German atrocities," which had been used and recycled throughout the war, either to keep their unfortunate cannon fodder at a fever pitch of indignation or to outrage naive third parties into joining the war on their side. There is not a serious historian today who would dare attribute the sole guilt for World War Ito Germany. The Kaiser, there is no doubt, enjoyed saber rattling, and would have been better advised to watch developments in Austria at the beginning of 1914 instead of vacationing on his yacht Hohenzollern in far-away Norway for three whole weeks. However, British greed, French thirst for vengeance and Pan-Slavic intrigues and provocations were far more responsible for the war than all the blustering of Kaiser Bill. Poincaré, a bitter and mediocre little man, did everything in his power as president of France to precipitate the war. Even de Gaulle later admitted that the war fulfilled Poincaré's "secret hope." Although the weight of historical evidence points the finger at the Allies, there is still ambivalence on the subject among g the successors of the 1919 Allies. They are trapped in the lies that led to World War II, once more trapped in justifying their responsibility in that mass killing.

If today's historians recognize the truth about the origins of World War I, at least in the relative sanctuary of academe, the mood in 1919 was quite different. German guilt and atrocities were articles of faith. To question them was unthinkable if one wished to avoid being branded a traitor, or worse. British propaganda mills had devised horror stories to suit each country's population.

They were to be the cannon fodder, and they had to be convinced. For four years the concoctions of the London propagandists would ceaselessly fill the ears of millions of gullible people. In big headlines the press kept pouring out enormous lies about Belgian Red Cross nurses being shot by Hun firing squads; it depicted little girls praying to the Virgin Mary to replace hands that had been savagely chopped off by barbaric Teutons. Then there were the Hun submarines constantly seeking to send American women and children to the bottom of the sea. If these lies are laughable today, they certainly swayed people into a permanent anti- German hysteria in 1919.

The cynical British Establishment had used the stories to justify sacrificing the lives of Englishmen and Scotsmen, and after the war the same stories justified the subjection and dismemberment of Germany. One of the biggest lies emerged as Article 231 of the peace treaty:

> The Allied governments and their associates declare, and Germany recognizes, that Germany and its allies are responsible for having caused all the losses and all damages incurred by the Allied governments, their associates and nationals as a consequence of the war that was imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and its allies.

Thus Germany was responsible for everything, and was forced to acknowledge that it recognized it was responsible for everything. Next came Article 232:

> The Allied governments and their associates demand, and Germany undertakes to comply, that reparation be given to the civilian population of each Allied power and associate who was caused damages during the period this power was in a state of belligerence with Germany by the said aggression either on land, sea or in the air.

When the wording and implications of the treaty became publicly known in Germany, shock swept the nation. The president of the Reichstag addressed that body: "The incredible has happened. Our enemies present us with a treaty surpassing in harshness everything the most pessimistic among us could have imagined." These words were uttered by a Socialist who, along with other Socialists, had proclaimed Germany a republic on November 9, 1918. They were no friends of the imperial regime they had replaced, but they were stunned by the severity of the treaty. They could not understand how the self-appointed champions of democracy could burden fellow democrats with such hatred and greed. The Kaiser had run away from Germany to the comfort of his Dutch estate and they were left to assume his alleged guilt. Hadn't their fellow democrats in Britain and France taken into account that they had overthrown the Kaiser just six months ago? The victors took no account of it whatsoever, and for good measure the treaty made the whole German people responsible for the war. This was a hard blow to the Socialists, who claimed to represent the people.

The treaty's doctrine of collective guilt was an unprecedented absurdity. The German people were no more responsible than the French, the English or the Russian people for the beginning, conduct and conclusion of the war. None of them had any say in the plots and counterplots of their respective ruling classes; none of them were ever privy to the secret talks and treaties that precipitated the war. The people were all cannon fodder for the benefit of international bankers and their catspaws, the politicians. Filled with lying propaganda, they had rushed to their deaths by the millions. The ordinary people of all sides were the ones who had suffered most. The maggots of high finance had grown fat on these mountains of corpses. The ordinary folk of Germany, as if they had not suffered enough, were to bear the brunt of Allied punishment. They had obeyed the laws, therefore they were to pay for being loyal citizens. Of the leaders of Germany in 1914, not one remained in government in 1919. The Socialists who had opposed them were now ordered to pay up. Not one in a thousand Germans or French could have explained why they were fighting each other. They might have repeated slogans that had been drummed into them, but basically they had fought for their fatherlands without analyzing the reasons. If their leaders were dishonorable scoundrels they, the people, had no cause to reproach themselves. The Treaty of Versailles struck at what was honorable in the German people; it was unjust, outrageous, humiliating and intolerable. Scheidemann asked on June 6, 1919, the day after Germany was handed the treaty: "Who is the honest man, I do not say who is the German, who, loyally respectful of this contract, could accept such conditions? What hand would not wither after having accepted for itself and for the others such chains?" Scheidemann, in any case, would not sign the treaty: "I will never put my name," he declared at the Reichstag "at the bottom of a treaty in which we would agree that the enemy can do with us whatever it will. I will not put my name to a treaty branding the German people with shame." (Scheidemann, The Collapse, p. 274) Scheidemann made a proposal to his ministers: "We must declare openly and loyally to the Entente: 'What you ask is impossible for us to perform. If you cannot understand it, you only have to come and settle in Berlin. Do not ask us to do your work for you; do not ask us to be the executioner of our own people.' " (ibid., p. 275) The Allies rejected Scheidemann's proposal with contempt.

In Berlin, the government crisis continued. No one wanted the "shameful work" of signing the treaty. Finally, President Ebert called on an obscure politician to form a new government. Matthias Erzberger was named vice- chancellor, and emerged as the real power in this improvised government. He settled on a half-way measure: "We must sign the treaty and at the same time protest that we are doing so under duress." The House was almost unanimous in replying that "it would be dishonest to sign commitments we knew we could not fulfil." Erzberger maintained: "I do not see what is dishonest about it. If you are bound hand and foot and you are threatened at gun point to sign a commitment that you will fly to the moon within 48 hours, what man, in order to save his life, would refuse to sign? This situation is identical to the Peace Treaty." (Benoist-Méchin, vol. I, p. 340) Erzberger also led the House to believe he

could palliate the treaty's harshest terms: "The Allies' demands are purely formal. Once we appease them on these they will make concessions." The vice-chancellor certainly knew better after the treatment the Allies had given him at Rethondes when he had to sign the Armistice. The German Reichstag was not convinced and Erzberger spread the rumors that Allied invasion was imminent. Many delegates panicked and took flight. And in these conditions of fear and confusion Erzberger finally obtained the votes for his motion of vague acceptance of the treaty. Naumann, the leader of the nationalists, warned Erzberger: "We need you today but tomorrow we will throw you out." On August 6, 1921 a young student, Heinrich Tillensen, would kill Erzberger in the Black Forest.

While the German delegates were getting ready to leave for Versailles, Marshal von Hindenburg, who did not intend to submit to foreign orders, sent his resignation as chief of the armed forces to the Reich president: "I prefer an honorable death to a shameful peace." . . ."Whatever sorrow," he recommended to the German people, "you may feel, your personal opinions must be secondary. It is only at the price of constant work, carried on in a spirit of unity, that we will succeed in saving our poor Germany from its misery. I salute you! I will never forget you." (Benoist-Méchin, vol. I, p. 364)

The two Erzberger delegates arrived at Versailles. Their hotel was immediately surrounded by barbed wire. On June 28, 1919, they were led to the Hall of Mirrors at the Royal Palace of Versailles. Ashen, eyes downcast, the German delegates were given a pen and told where to sign. Fearfully they put their names to the Allied "Diktat," as the treaty was to become known in Germany.

Thus the fate of Germany was sealed by a band of unscrupulous and mediocre little men. It was somewhat ironic that they chose Versailles, symbol of the French greatness their revolutionary mentors has almost destroyed, to conclude their petty and miserable vengeance.

Chapter 80

Versailles Gave Birth to Hitler

Wilson had grown bitter and ailing as he realized his Fourteen Points had been permanently discarded. He had been unable to change anything in the final outcome of the Treaty. He returned home a broken man. Lloyd George, who a few months before was talking about squeezing Germany dry, was now uncomfortable with the results. He felt France was getting too much and could become a threat to British trade. British policy was to k eep all European countries weak and not to make any of the stronger. English delegate Harold Nicolson, who had previously displayed an unusual degree of conscience, recorded his views of the Treaty:

> Reading this treaty makes me sicker and sicker. The reparation clauses are the greatest crime. They were written in for the sole purpose of pleasing the House of Commons and are impossible to implement. If I were a German I would not sign. This treaty does not give them hope for the present or the future. It is sheer madness and the worst of it is that these Huns would have accepted anything that was reasonable. (*When We Made Peace*, p. 203/204)

Nicolson noted in his diary:

> Tuesday June 17, 1919: The Council of Ten allows a Turkish delegation to present their case. It is scandalous that the Turks have the right to argue their case while the Germans are guarded in cages at Versailles. Wednesday, June 18. It is uncertain whether the Germans will sign. The less optimistic believe they are going to refuse to sign, that we will advance on the Rhine and they will sign under pressure. The pessimists believe they will hand over power to the

> Bolsheviks as Karolyi has done and we will have a Red central Europe. If they do it will be our fault. Tuesday June 24. People here are relieved that the Weimar Assembly has authorized the treaty to be signed (by their emissaries) but rather embarrassed by the sinking of the German navy. It gives us the appearance of being worse than we are, and absurd ... (*When We Made Peace*, p. 222-225)

Even such enemies of Germany as Marshal Smuts of South Africa and Lenin were acknowledging for their own reasons the inequity of the Treaty. Said Nicolson, after seeing Smuts: "I had dinner with Smuts. He has finally consented to sign the Treaty but only after protesting and against his conscience." Lenin declared: "A peace of usurers and executioners has been imposed on Germany. This country has been plundered and dismembered ... All its means of survival were taken away. This is an incredible bandits' peace." Lenin should certainly know.

June 28, 1919 was the Allies' big day. The Royal Palace of Versailles had been refurbished for the occasion. Clemenceau was there sitting beneath an old inscription: "The King governs by himself." "He was," recalled Nicolson, "a shrunken individual with sallow complection." Clemenceau ordered: "Bring in the Germans." The Germans assigned to this humiliating task were Dr. Bell and Dr. Mueller, two obscure political figures. Clemenceau said drily: "Gentlemen, the session is opened. We are here to sign the peace treaty." No other word was uttered. In deathly silence the German envoys signed, then the Allies. "The session is closed," said Clemenceau. The guards who had brought the Germens in escorted them out. No one had the civility of talking to them or even shaking their hands. Contrary to all precedents in the annals of diplomacy, the German emissaries were treated like criminals or lepers. Nicolson recalled: "Everything was horrible. We were later served champagne courtesy of the taxpayers." A few years later Churchill would absolve the Germans and their leaders of deliberate wrongdoing:

The execution of this vast plan for war was deemed necessary by the German leaders not only for the victory of Germany but for its very security and survival. They felt no other option when the Russians mobilized. The conditions of the Franco-Russian alliance placed them in the possibility of a war on two fronts against superior forces. Their sincerity cannot be doubted. (World Crisis, vol. IV, p. 434)

Politicians' actions seldom reflect their words. Churchill, like Lloyd George and Lansing, had stated before the treaty was signed that its contents would ensure new hatred and conflict, a new war more devastating than the last. Yet, with full knowledge of the likely consequences, they all signed. The peace treaty was in fact the vengeance treaty. It was therefore logical it would create a strong reaction in Germany. The clause on collective guilt had the effect of uniting the whole German people, from extreme left to extreme right. The socialist president of the German Reichstag, Herr Fehrenbach, had forseen its results:

"The sufferings engendered by this treaty will create in Germany a generation whose sole aim from birth will be to break the chains of a slavery that was imposed on them," (Benoist-Méchin, vol. I, p. 334). The question was now: Who was going to break the chains? Germany looked for an avenger to smash the Treaty of Vengeance. The avenger could belong to the conventional right and left wings of German politics or any other Establishment entities, whether financial, military, or religious. The Socialists were numerous but had proved themselves indecisive and cowardly. They had been saved from Communist annihilation only by Noske's iron will and fist. Now that the danger had passed, they execrated and rejected their savior, and had fallen back into their drab and mediocre ways. For 14 years they would play musical chairs with one another with petty expediency. Always uninspiring, they would fail to motivate and they would fail to lead. The Socialist fear of ideals and greatness prevented anyone to emerge to any position of real leadership. Everybody was leveled down to a common denominator of mediocrity, the very essence of Marxism. The middle classes, bourgeois and industrial groups were just as craven as the Socialists. The fear of losing whatever material possessions they had was all-pervasive and paralyzed the right. Both the left and right had fear and mediocrity in common. They had no faith in anything except the basest of material considerations. The German people were looking for inspired leadership and found frightened sheep instead. Above all there was a total absence of anyone with guts. Along with the politics of mediocrity came the usual corruption, confusion, and demoralization, the mainstays of democratic regimes. The Weimar mediocrities would misgovern and mismanage their way until 1933, when Germany had virtually ground to a halt. The German people withdrew its support from the grubby democratic dealers, who were now the object of loathing and contempt. A transcending unity was being forged, despite the combined opposition of the left and the right. Instinctively people knew that the press and the conventional political parties did not represent them: they were instead an integral part of the cancer that was destroying their country. The right wore the mantle of patriotism but never went beyond words to exercise their patriotism while the left was captive of nebulous and incoherant Marxist mouthings. The saviour ol Germany would sweep aside all these contradictory and outdated factors. He would unite the workers in partnership with the industrialists on the premise that work is the real wealth and capital of a nation. Class war only benefited professional trade unionists living off the workers and the capitalist monopolies, both committed to the status quo, against progress. The Weimar "mediocrities" had failed to free Germany from the shackles of the peace treaty, which was the one issue uniting all Germans.

They had failed to gauge Germany's mood. People were willing to sacrifice themselves for the high purpose of saving Germany but no one was willing to fight and die for the sake of a pork chop or a pair of socks. The Weimar politicians were engrossed in materialism and just could not conceive of principles and ideals as a motivating factor. In fact they feared the popular will. The mass of non-issues which were being presented at election times or filling the newspapers

were designed to diffuse popular resolve and energy. People's aspirations were side-tracked into dead-end roads. People's attempts to raise themselves above mediocre conditions were thwarted by the apostles of mediocrity. In human affairs people yearn for an ideal to believe in. Religious or political figures who fail to fulfill people's aspirations are destined for oblivion. It was when Germany had sunk to its lowest level of political mismanagement, when corruption and depravity were foisted on the nation from the top, when all seemed hopeless, that the people experienced their greatest need for regeneracy. Whoever had the qualities to answer the popular call would find the power to restore Germany's freedom and honor. Collective impotence would be swept away by the man who would truly embody popular dynamism. He would fight for national honor, social justice, and class cooperation. Workers and industrialists all belonged to the same nation, to the same economic entity. Class war was an error against nature, a cynical exploitation of the productive elements of the nation. It had to be replaced by a genuine collaboration, with all parties sharing in the social profits. All work and all workers would have to be respected. The savior of Germany would be not only a nationalist but also a socialist: a patriot and a defender of social justice. He would not be trapped in a web of Marxist dialectics pitting members of the same nation against one another. He would gather all the energy of all the people for the benefit of social and national unity and for the benefit of all the people. This man who both would be a nationalist and socialist idealist; did he exist in Germany of 1919? He was nowhere to be seen. There were mediocre politicians, cogs in unrepresentative party machines of nationalists without leadership or revolutionaries controlled by aliens and railroaded into murderous uprisings for the benefit of alien interests. Yet this man existed, and his time had come.

Chapter 81

Hitler, Born at Versailles

Who in Germany of 1919 would have thought of Hitler? Out of 60 million Germans there could not have been a thousand who knew his name. Not even 20 Frenchmen, not 10 Americans or Englishmen. Born in Austria, he was not a German citizen. He had fought with valor at the front. He was awarded the Iron Cross, First and Second Class, for his courage. But who among the military officers commanding him would have seen something other than a brave soldier? In November 1918 the doctors at the Pasewalk hospital feared he would be permanently handicapped: he had been severely blinded by British poison gas in Flanders a month before. All he owned was a worn uniform and an old pair of shoes. He was the unknown soldier. Never involved in politics, he had been an extremely individualistic young man. An orphan in Vienna, he had often had to find shelter in city refuges. He was an artist and his drawings were quite good. After the war he was alleged to have been a house painter or a cheap artist of postcards and match-boxes. As a literally starving artist he may have taken up such work to keep body and soul together but more than 700 drawings and paintings dating from his early life have since been found, which means he must have created thousands of pieces of art. Much of his work is remarkable; the drawn lines are firm and graceful. A number of his most important paintings are somewhat academic, in the style of 19th-century landscape artists. Some of his other works have been conceived with great daring in inspiration with the contrast and combined harmony of the colors. His portraits are sometimes striking, particularly his NapoLéon, which is as firm and inspired as a David. There is also a light-hearted sketch of himself as a soldier with a short moustache. His sketches were swift and to the point; in seconds he captured the essense of a situation. His architectural plans were extraordinary in their power and clarity. The whole history of Hitler the artist has to be rewritten if only for the sake of art. The same goes for Hitler the poet. His first poems, his hundreds of drawings and paintings, were not involved with politics. In all his works there was not a single political caricature, not even of Franz Josef, whom he did not like and could have easily drawn. Even after the War Hitler ignored such

obvious candidates for caricature as Ebert and Scheidemann. His work was full of portraits, sketches and humorous caricatures, but they were of friends, fellow soldiers at the front or himself.

In Vienna he had intently followed parliamentary debates on occasion but was far more likely to be found watching performances of Wagner's operas. Music was, even more than art, his passion. He lived for music and drew strength from it. Although he never gave any indication of wanting to get involved in politics while serving at the front it was known later that politics were secretly on his mind. The tragedy of the post-war era would project him into the political arena. The inequity of the Versailles Peace Treaty created the exceptional circumstances that paved Hitler's road to power. All the obstacles that would have stood in his way were swept away by the treaty. Hitler as a political man was born at Versailles. He discovered politics by trial and error. First he lectured, on the order of his military superiors, to groups of returned servicemen. Then he addressed little political gatherings with a handful of participants. Within a few months he realized, as did others, that he possessed an extraordinary gift of persuasion. His raucous voice moved people to the deepest depth of their subconscious. He emanated the power which distinguished a leader of men from all others. Throughout Germany's distress he had made contact with people's true feelings. He had concentrated the great national and social issues within himself. Alone and against all odds Hitler's extraordinary inner force and will-power would lead Germany out of bondage and misery. Within months his audiences were convinced that patriotism could not exist without socialism nor socialism without patriotism. The conventional politicians kept mouthing the same old tired meaningless party lines and slogans. They were trapped in them. People felt also trapped in the endless and doleful platitudes. Hitler's ideas and eloquence was striking by comparison; they had the galvanizing effect of breathing life and hope to the victims, to the helpless. Every word reached home. Gone were the political lies and disinformation; he spoke of real concerns and matters of substance in words that everybody understood and felt deeply. He spoke with flawless logic and biting irony and released all the legitimate anger, all the energy that Weimar politicians had made it their business to suppress. The public responded generously to this unknown orator who spoke to them so personally. Whether bourgeois or proletarian, his audiences felt Hitler was addressing them individually as full persons, not in the contemptible way politicians treat people as a mindless flock of sheep. Hitler used no props or political tricks to impress the gallery as he went on addressing meetings wearing the same old raincoat. In a country not indifferent to pomp and circumstance Hitler held his audiences spellbound by the sole power of his word. Many of his enemies have said his oratory swayed and conquered the masses as if he had dispensed bombastic rhetoric but they did not realize that people found themselves in what Hitler was saying: the unique discovery that they mattered, that someone of charismatic power was speaking what they always felt and thought. It had never happened and it was an exhilarating experience. People responded to Hitler's inner strength. He was not anybody's man; he owed favors to no

one; the speeches he uttered were his, he took responsibility for his words and his actions. In an era of interchangeable, faceless politicians, frightened front men and alien agents, Hitler's mere presence shone out like a beacon. By the year 1923 Hitler was still feeling his way but at increasingly well- attended meetings. This was the year of the putsch. From Scheidemann to Kapp and Lüttwitz, the notion of forcing events was widely accepted. Hitler, like others, made the political mistake of risking everything in a premature uprising. He learned his lesson. When he got out of Landsberg prison, he no longer was in a hurry to start another confrontation. He understood there could be no fruitful action without an impeccable organization. He also realized that stable power could only be acquired through legality, resting fundamentally on the will of the majority. It would only be at the end of ten years of almost superhuman work and 25,000 meetings and gatherings that he would reach, as he had planned, the chancery, after conquering the Reichstag in the most democratic way. He had been subjected to every opposition and obstruction by the Establishment forces: the press, the bureaucrats, the special-interest politicians, the government, the churches, the conservatives, the monarchists, the banks, Jewish financiers and Communists, Freemasons, Social Democrats, liberals, reactionaries, and the army officer corps. He and his party members were under constant physical attack from the very well organized Communist Party of Germany. At the beginning all his meetings were violently disrupted and many of his supporters were killed or wounded. It was not until he was able to organize a security system of self- defense that people could feel free to listen to him without fear of being murdered or maimed. Despite the relentless attempts in curtailing his freedom of speech Hitler perservered unafraid against all perpetrators of violence. The order was out: shut Hitler up at any cost.

He survived and triumphed. It was unprecedented in history. Those who aspire to leadership do so with the backing and complicity from patrons or some other existing power structure. Hitler was opposed by every vested interest in the land; his only backing came from the people. While all the rich and powerful failed Hitler succeeded. The answer lay in Hitler's amazing gift of organization and his unshakeable belief that popular will must prevail. It took a remarkable man to bear with equanimity the odium and violence thrown at him by every section of the establishment. He kept his eyes to the goal he had set out to reach, forged ahead and left his detractors and tormentors behind fuming with rage and frustration: the lot of destructive and unproductive people. When the elections took place Hitler had assembled the most powerful popular party Europe had ever known. On January 30, 1933 he would reach the Reich's Chancery in a strictly loyal way. By June, 1933 Hitler was democratically given full executive power. In 1935 the Saarland, which was under Allied control where Hitler had been prevented from campaigning even though he had been chancellor for two years, voted overwhelmingly and democratically for Hitler. In Austria Hitler's old political foes realized the public had spoken. Former Socialist Chancellor Renner and Vienna's Cardinal Innitzer had urged the voters to back Anschluss, the reunion with Germany, just as Hitler had asked. Cardinal Innitzer had even

signed his appeal with a large "Heil Hitler." In the secrecy of the voting booth people felt safe to give Hitler their votes. I have never seen such fervor and enthusiasm generated with such spontaneity. Countless flowers were deposited around busts of Hitler by thousands of people, who just wanted to show their appreciation. It has been an enduring and galling truth for Hitler's detractors to swallow: Germany had become Hitlerian by the wish of the people, as expressed at the ballot box. In 1919 Scheidemann had correctly predicted: "It is my firm conviction that the political future can only belong to those who will have opposed such demands (of the Versailles Treaty) by a categoric refusal." It was Hitler's destiny to reject and smash the iniquitous treaty. Twenty- one years after the crushing of Germany, Hitler would arrive in Paris victorious: he had torn asunder the chains of bondage. On the first morning, he went to meditate at the tomb of Emperor NapoLéon, whom he had painted on canvas in his youth. NapoLéon had said: "Politics is destiny." As Hitler had swept away the Versaille Treaty, Bonaparte had on the 18th of Brumaire swept away the bloody French Revolution. I was in Paris at the time and was sharing a meal with my friend Otto Abetz, Germany's new ambassador to France. We were both scarcely more than 30 and pondered the eventual fate of the treaty. It had been found abandoned in a train during the panic flight of French politicians. The grand signatures of the victors of 1919, enhanced by scarlet wax, which were supposed to destroy Germany forever, were now without meaning. This famous treaty, which represented so much vengeance, greed and humiliation, had been left behind in the throes of a shameful debacle. It was there on my table, a historical curiosity. The treaty was well and truly dead. A page of human history had been turned. Whatever happend in the future, this volume would now be obsolete, never to be revived.